

This is to certify
that

SELECTION OF ENGLISH, URDU AND HINDI
 CAN BE HAD ON THE FOLLOWING TERMS:
 1. MONTHLY PREMIUM RUNS ONE,
 2. THE COST OF THE BOOK DEPOSIT,
 3. ONE BOOK WILL BE GIVEN DAILY,
 THE KASHMIR NOVEL AGENCY 1ST BRIDGE

PROP.
 PIR HASSANUD DIN



Bring an appetite to breakfast!

How's your breakfast appetite?

Can you tackle a hearty meal, or does the sight of even a boiled egg repel you?

If so, you need a little daily dose of Kruschen Salts to put your system right—to keep the engine running smoothly and truly.

Why Kruschen? Why not any other Salts?

Because Kruschen contains not merely a single salt, like Epsom or Glauber, the effect of which is limited. There are six different salts in Kruschen, and every tiny pinch you take is a combination of those six salts.

You take nothing on trust. Kruschen has won the confidence of millions by printing the analysis on every bottle. Your doctor will tell you that the six salts in Kruschen are necessary for healthy life, and that you feel well or ill according to the accuracy with which you maintain Nature's balance of them in your system.

If you lead a healthy, open-air life, got plenty of exercise, avoided all errors of diet, worry, and

overwork, your body would extract these salts for itself from your food. But very few people—and certainly no town dweller—can claim to lead so ideal a life. Yet you must get those six salts from somewhere, and you must get them every day. Kruschen supplies them. Hence the necessity for the "little daily dose."

Try taking it in your breakfast cup of tea every morning. Experience for yourself the glorious feeling of fitness and exhilaration that comes when the system is freed from the clogging waste matter that has been producing listlessness, depression, headaches, sleeplessness, "nerves," and a general state of unhappiness. Feel the new, refreshed blood coursing through your veins. Acquire, in fact, an unfailing supply of "that Kruschen feeling."

The cost is only a farthing a day. So get a 1s. 9d. bottle of Kruschen Salts at once. Start the good habit of the "little daily dose" now, and enjoy your breakfast every day.



Tasteless in Tea

Put as much in your breakfast cup as will lie on a sixpence. It's the little daily dose that does it.

Kruschen Salts

Good Health for a Farthing a Day

HOW HOSPITALS CURE CHRONIC CONSTIPATION

A TRAINED NURSE'S ADVICE.

This season usually finds the liver and other excretory organs clogged with impurities resulting from the very heavy heat-producing winter diet. A sluggish liver, intestinal congestion, headache, dizziness, muddy or pimpled complexion, "liverishness," backache, biliousness, indigestion and languor are what doctors term "the beginning of all disease," for they show that dangerous toxins are being drawn into the blood. Poisonous cathartics, such as calomel (mercury), often irritate the liver to convulsive action but do not stop adherence to walls of the intestines nor cleanse and strengthen the delicate secretory ducts and glands. For this latter purpose there is nothing equal to Kal-sel, the refined deposits of certain natural curative medicinal waters, obtainable at small cost from any chemist. Get a small supply and take daily a level teaspoonful dissolved in a half tumbler of water, continuing until all signs of disorder have disappeared. You will very soon begin to enjoy life again as Nature intended you should. Mental effort and concentration are no longer difficult, hard work becomes a pleasure, and that constant tired feeling completely disappears. Avoid strong cathartic pills, lowering salts or drugs, eat moderately, and drink occasionally a little of the Kal-sel water—Nature's own liver clarifier—and you need never fear a recurrence of the disorders.—H. L. K.

SPECIAL NOTE.—We are informed that sufficient Kal-sel for a thorough test will be supplied entirely free of cost to anyone interested in the product. Just send a postcard to Saltrates Ltd. (Dept. 197), Euston Buildings, London, N.W.1.

All the News in
a Nutshell in

The **DAILY GRAPHIC**

The Perfect
Picture Paper.



FREE

BIG CATALOGUE
OF MONEY SAVING
**CHINA
BARGAINS**
HUNDREDS OF DESIGNS
IN ACTUAL COLORS
FOR ALL BUYERS

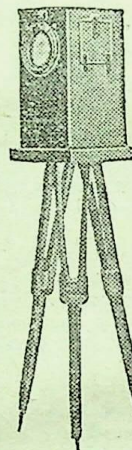
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HOUSEHOLD and Private Orders our **SPECIALITY**
splendid Bargains in China, Pottery and Glass. Tea, Dinner and
Toilet Sets from 12/9. Complete Home Outfits from 51/6. **Cater-**
ing Crockery Outfits from 75/-.

SPECIAL UNBREAKABLE QUALITY
China for Kitchen, Camp, Barrack, Hospital Use.
Patent Non-drip Teapots. The pot that saves the Cloth. Our own
invention and manufacture. Guaranteed Perfect, Successful,
Economical. **PRICES REDUCED**

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CENTURY POTTERY CO., Manufacturers (O.M.T.), BURSLEM, Staffs.

MANSFIELD'S PATENT AUTOMATIC Water & Oil Finders



are used by leading Governments, Railway Companies, Land Companies, Well-boring Engineers, and others.

A COLONIAL ENGINEER writes:

"Since purchasing the instrument I have selected 300 sites, most of which I have either bored upon with our own plants or had bored by sub-contractors. In every instance we have been successful."

Prices of Water Finding instruments are:—

£50 locating at all depths up to 200 ft.
£75 " " " 500 ft.
£125 " " " 1,000 ft.

Prices of Water and Oil Finding instruments are:—

£200 locating at all depths up to 3,500 ft.
£275 " " " 4,500 ft.
£375 " " " 6,000 ft.

Delivery at Colonial or Foreign Sea-ports £3 extra.

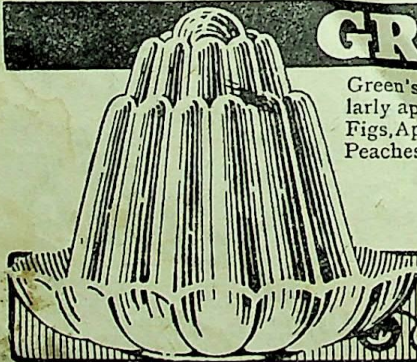
We undertake the location of sites and boring at lump sum prices under guarantee of

"No full supply no pay."

Particulars on application to

W. MANSFIELD & CO.,
17 BRUNSWICK STREET, LIVERPOOL.

Makers of Well-Boring Plant, Pumps, Windmills, Oil Engines, and everything connected with Water Supply and Irrigation.
Cables: "MANTLES, LIVERPOOL." Tel. No.: 1392 BANK.



GREEN'S CHOCOLATE MOULD with fruit

Green's Chocolate Mould is most delicious and is particularly appetising when served with Stewed Prunes, Plums, Figs, Apples, Blackberries or with tinned Pineapple, Pears, Peaches, Apricots, etc. Try this enjoyable sweet to-day.

GREEN'S CHOCOLATE MOULD

(Chocolate Blanc-Mango)

Prepared by Greens of Brighton.

PER **5^D** PACKET





Buy CLARNICO LILY BRAZILS

Never stand hesitating—go in and ask for CLARNICO LILY BRAZILS, the finest sweets of all. Everybody likes them, and they're nourishing, too: sugar, butter, cream and choice brazil-nut kernels.

If you prefer Chocolates, ask for CLARNICO CHOCOLATE LILY BRAZILS—9d. per $\frac{1}{4}$ -lb.—a very nice chocolate.

8^d PER QR·LB
COVERED IN CHOCOLATE
9^d per $\frac{1}{4}$ lb

“Get the
L I L Y
BRAZIL
HABIT”!

CLARNICO LILY BRAZILS

Made by CLARKE NICKOLLS & COOMBS Ltd
VICTORIA PARK LONDON

Quality! Quality! and yet again Quality!



OYEZ! OYEZ!

Whereas the people of our nation do eat and enjoy the good toffee of Mackintosh's in its varied forms and flavours

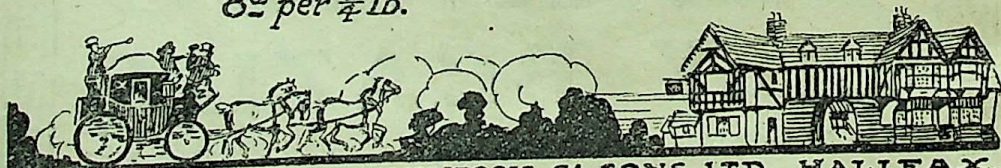
Be it known that all sellers of sweets do now stock and supply a toffee of old fashioned character made according to an old time recipe and being exceedingly pleasant to taste.

Know then by these presents that this new sweetmeat is a worthy addition to the famous Mackintosh Toffees-de-Luxe—in which good people of all ages find unending satisfaction.

Ask at ye sweetshoppe this day for—

Mackintosh's OLD ENGLISH Toffee de Luxe

8d per $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.



MADE BY JOHN MACKINTOSH & SONS LTD. HALIFAX.

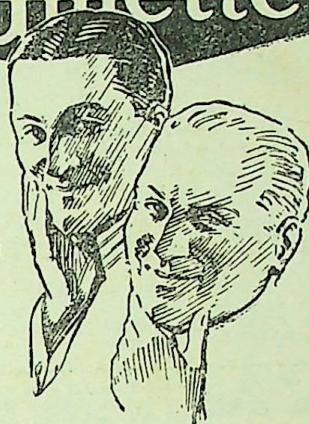
KNOWN THE WORLD OVER

TRADE

Gillette

MARK

*The Shave
with the
Smile in it*



*By appointment
to His Royal
Highness The
Prince of Wales.*

NOW is the time to decide your Xmas Gifts

Full Selection of Gift Outfits available at all dealers.

As an expression of your Christmas good wishes there is no gift like the gift of a Gillette.

It combines beauty, efficiency, economy with a wonderful service that has never been equalled and

. there's a Gillette outfit to suit every pocket ranging from the New Improved Gillette 21/- and upwards, down to the attractive popular compact sets at 5/-, each outfit a handsome practical gift that any man will be delighted with, a gift that will be used daily and appreciated throughout the New Year and onwards for many years to come. Give Him a Gillette—buy the outfit now!

Gillette



**Safety
Razor**

NO STROPPING

NO HONING

NEW STANDARD Triple Silver plated New Improved Gillette Safety Razor, Metal Box containing 12 double edge Gillette Blades (24 shaving edges) in Genuine Leather Covered Case, purple velvet and satin lined. **21/-**
Also Gold Plated 25/-

Obtainable at Stores, Cutlers, Ironmongers, Chemists, Hairdressers and Jewellers.

WRITE FOR BOOKLET.

Gillette Safety Razor Ltd., 134-138, Great Portland Street, London, W.1.

XMAS GIFTS OVERSEAS

Approx. last dates for posting to arrive Christmas day:—

AUSTRALIA	...	November 12
NEW ZEALAND	...	5
INDIA	...	30
SOUTH AFRICA	...	30
CANADA	...	December 8

Post early to ensure delivery in time.

The Charm of Youth

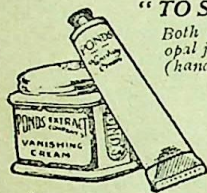
lies mainly in the complexion, and if a youthful appearance is to be retained as the years creep on, it is the complexion to which particular care must be devoted.

The regular use of Pond's Vanishing Cream, which refreshes the skin and protects it against wind, rain and dust, cannot fail to preserve the beauty of the complexion and to keep it always attractively smooth and supple. Use it also as a base for powder.

The fullest benefits of this fascinating day-cream are obtained when Pond's Cold Cream is also applied every night. This perfectly pure cream is unparalleled for cleansing the pores and preserving contour.

"TO SOOTHE AND SMOOTH YOUR SKIN."

Both creams obtainable from all chemists and stores in opal jars at 1/3 and 2/6, and in collapsible tubes at 7 1/2 (handbag size) and 1/-.

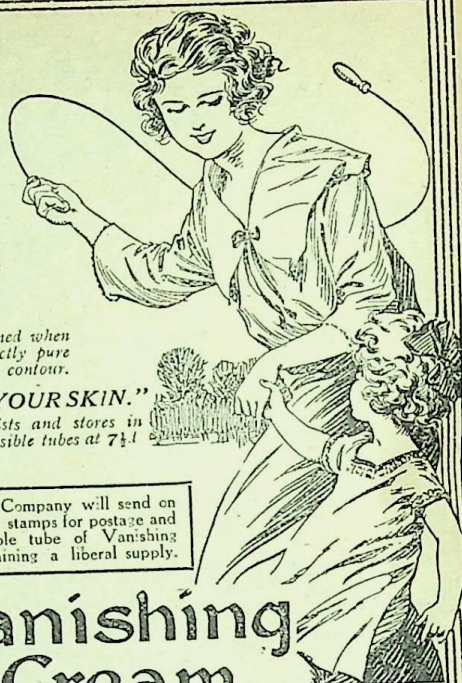


**FREE
SAMPLES**

Pond's Extract Company will send on receipt of 3d. in stamps for postage and packing, a sample tube of Vanishing Cream and Cold Cream containing a liberal supply.

Ponds Vanishing Cream

POND'S EXTRACT CO., 71 Southampton Row, London, W.C.1.



CLEMAK

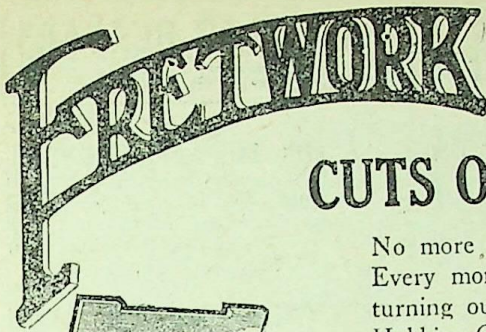
Safety Razor

MINUTE TO STROP
MOMENT TO CLEAN



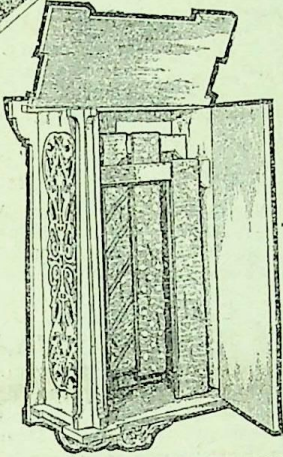
'CLEMAK' BLADES THAT LAST

Sold Everywhere



CUTS OUT DULL EVENINGS

No more long evenings if you have a fretwork set. Every moment is happy, and all the while you are turning out something useful and attractive. Get a Hobbies Outfit of Tools now; you can start right away.



A novel Tie
Box made
from Design
No. 953.
Price 4d.

COMPLETE OUTFITS 4/- to 57/6
COPYRIGHT DESIGNS 1d. to 1/6

All sorts of fine things can be made, and a free design is given weekly with "Hobbies," which your newsagent can supply, price 2d., every Wednesday.

FREE CABINET DESIGN

The new 1924 Catalogue has 200 pages of 15 different pastimes. A free 1/6 design for Hanging China Cabinet is given away. Get your copy now—price 9d., or 1/- post free.

HOBBIES LTD. (Dept. 52), DEREHAM, NORFOLK

Branches at London, Glasgow, Manchester,
Birmingham, Leeds and Southampton.

Some pens are good for tailors

—by leaking they spoil so many suits
of clothes.

Onoto the Pen cannot leak

Call at your stationer's and ask to see an Onoto Self-filling Safety Pen. You switch off the ink and it cannot turn itself on any more than the electric light can.



Onoto the Pen,
Streamline
Model in black
or red vulcanite
21/-

Onoto the Pen,
self-filling
safety, 17/6

Whenever you see
a Pillar Box think
of an Onoto.

Onoto the Pen

SELF-FILLING SAFETY MODEL

There are Onotos of all types to meet everyone's requirements. Prices from 17/6 to £10 10 0.

THOMAS DE LA RUE & CO. LTD., 110, BUNHILL ROW, LONDON, E.C.1.



RHEUMATIC TWINGES— WHAT TO DO FOR THEM

Mr. Eugene Corri, famous official of the National Sporting Club, and the World's premier referee, explains the non-dosing treatment he uses himself.

It is a fact well known to the medical profession that in severely painful cases of rheumatism, sciatica, lumbago, neuritis, backache, etc., a course of hot medicated baths at some good mineral spring can always be depended upon to produce quick results. The trouble is that this usually means travelling long distances from home, and the great expenditure of time and money makes such treatment a luxury to be enjoyed only by the wealthy.



Some sufferers think only the wealthy can obtain such benefits. This, in my opinion, is an entirely mistaken idea. I know from personal experience the good results produced by hot sulphur baths, alkaline and saline baths, mud baths, and mineral springs of various kinds, but after trying most of the well-known resorts, both here and on the continent, I found a method of treatment at home which proved even better and certainly more prompt and lasting in its effects, also far more convenient. Never before in my life did I experience the prompt and inexpressibly gratifying relief from all pain which followed a bath in saltrated water, something which anyone can enjoy at any convenient time at trifling cost, and right in the privacy of his own home. Mr. Eugene Corri, the well-known authority upon physical fitness, recently wrote me: "The medicated water stops any rheumatic pains in a few minutes. Just like a visit to a Spa." This medicated water is prepared by dissolving in plain hot water a good handful of Reudel Bath Saltrates, a compound which most chemists keep ready put up in convenient and inexpensive packets of different sizes, so it is a simple matter to give the treatment a trial. An occasional bath in the highly medicated and oxygenated water thus produced has for nearly three years kept me entirely free of the constant gnawing, grinding, piercing pains, muscular soreness, swellings and stiff joints which once made life utterly miserable for me.—C. H. N.

DON'T LOOK OLD!

But restore your grey and faded hairs to their natural colour with

LOCKYER'S Sulphur HAIR RESTORER.

Its quality of deepening greyness to the former colour in a few days, thus securing a preserved appearance, has enabled thousands to retain their position.

2/- Sold Everywhere. 2/- Lockyer's gives health to the Hair and restores the natural colour. It cleanses the scalp, and makes the most perfect Hair Dressing.

This world-famed Hair Restorer is prepared by the great Hair Specialists J. Pepper & Co., Ltd., 22 Bedford Laboratories, London, S.E.1, and can be obtained direct from them by post, or from any chemists and stores throughout the world.

SULPHOLINE

This famous lotion quickly removes Skin Eruptions, ensuring a clear complexion. The slight rash, faintest spot, irritable pimples, disfiguring blotches, obstinate eczema, disappear by applying SULPHOLINE, which renders the skin spotless, soft, clear, supple, comfortable. For 40 years it has been the remedy for

Eruptions	Psoriasis	Eczema	Blotches
Pimples	Roughness	Scurf	Spots
Redness	Rashes	Acne	Rosacea

Sulpholine is prepared by the great Skin Specialists, J. PEPPER & Co., Ltd., 22 Bedford Laboratories, London, S.E.1, and is sold in bottles at 1/3 and 3/4. It can be obtained direct from them by post or from any Chemists and Stores throughout the world.

Quickly removes the effects of Sunburn.

FREE GIFTS FOR OUR READERS

Several well-known Manufacturers are offering Free Gifts to our Readers this month as per the following particulars.

SOMETHING FOR THE LITTLE ONES.—

A beautifully illustrated Fairy Story Book is being presented by the proprietors of Wright's Coal Tar Soap. To obtain a copy write to Messrs. Wright, Layman & Umney, Ltd., Dept. 117, Southwark, London, S.E.1.

A BEAUTY GIFT.—To obtain liberal free samples of Pond's Vanishing Cream and Cold Cream, write to Messrs. Pond's Extract Co., 71 Southampton Row, London, W.C.1, enclosing 3d. in stamps to cover postage and packing.

A FREE 10-DAY TRIAL.—A trial tube of Pepsodent, the new Tooth Paste, sufficient to last 10 days, can be obtained post free by writing to Dept. 161, The Pepsodent Company, 42 Southwark Bridge Road, London, S.E.1.

RHEUMATISM & NEURALGIA.—

On receipt of a post card, mentioning *Cassell's Magazine*, Messrs. Cephos, Ltd., Blackburn, will send you a free sample of "Cephos," the Physician's Remedy for Headache, Neuralgia, Rheumatism, etc.

FREE SHAVING STICK.—If you write to Messrs. Culmak (Dept. 7), 50 Durham Road, London, N.7, they will send you a dainty shaving stick, big enough to last for several weeks. It is necessary to enclose 3d. in stamps to cover postage and packing.

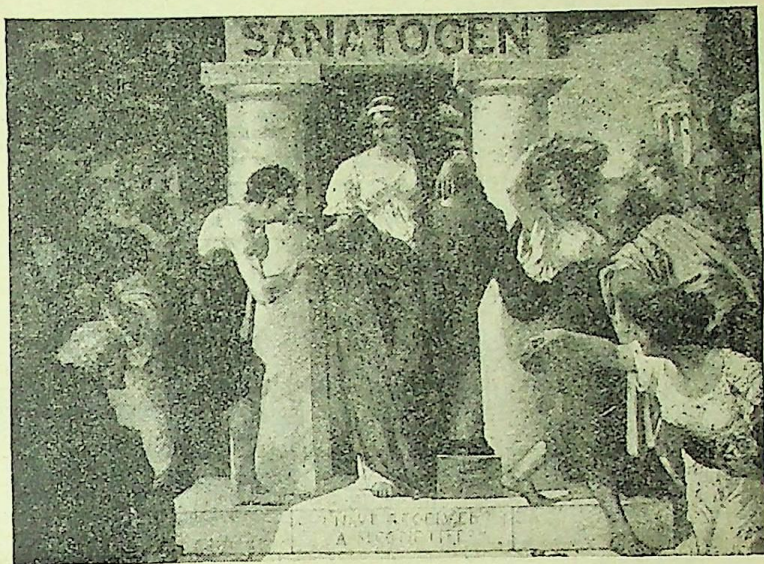
A BRIGHT GIFT FOR LADIES.—Messrs. Osobrite, Ltd., Brighton, offer to send a sample bottle of "Osobrite," the new liquid silver polish, on receipt of 3d. in stamps. "Osobrite" cleans all silver, electroplate and jewellery.

A MOTHERS' BOOK.—Messrs. Allen & Hanburys, Ltd., 37 Lombard Street, London, E.C.3, offer to send free of all charge a copy of "Infant Feeding and Management," and a sample of their well-known Food.

A TREAT FOR THE CHILDREN.—

Send a post card to Messrs. Turner & Wainwright (Dept. A), Brighouse, Yorks, and you will receive a delightful series of Coloured Natural History cards, free of charge, per return post.

FOR EVERY MOTHER.—A beautiful illustrated Catalogue of everything for baby, from the smallest article of wearing apparel to the most luxurious carriage, is sent post free to all mothers who write to Dept. 2F, Treasure Cot Co., Ltd., 103, Oxford Street, London W.1.



There is Health in every Cupful of Sanatogen

"After I have taken Sanatogen I feel just as if a stream of energy had been poured into my body!" So said a patient to his doctor; and his quaint but vivid words were more scientific than he knew.

For when you drink a cupful of Sanatogen—which, by the way, costs you about twopence halfpenny—almost every atom of that bland, creamy-white fluid is absorbed into your bloodstream—carried to your brain and nerve-cells—and rapidly transmuted into nervous and mental energy. That is a physiological fact—and one which it will pay you to investigate.

Resolve to Try

SANATOGEN

THE GENUINE FOOD-TONIC

Buy a tin at your chemist's to-day—from 2/3—and take two or three cupfuls daily for a time; its energising powers will astonish you. But be sure you get the real thing—bearing our name and address on the label.

GENATOSAN, LTD., Loughborough, Leicestershire.

DOCTORS AND ANALYSTS
RECOMMEND
DELICIOUS

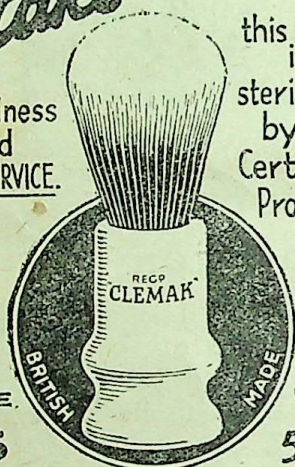
MAZAWATTEE TEA

MANY DYSPEPTICS WHO ARE OBLIGED
TO AVOID ORDINARY TEA FIND THEY
CAN DRINK THIS WITH GREAT RELISH

SOLD BY
ALL
GROCERS

*Don't
take risks—*

Cleanliness
and
LONG SERVICE.



this brush
is
sterilized
by a
Certified
Process

PRICE.
3/6

Larger
Sizes
5/6 7/6

Your Dealer will show you the

'CLEMAK'

SHAVING BRUSH

Clema Safety Razor Co., Kingsway, London.

Hercules

FOR WASH AND WEAR

Hercules Overalls and Frocks excel still for daily wear, both for children and adults. No other fabric gives greater satisfaction or stands such constant washing without losing its attractive appearance. Hercules Overalls are pre-eminent for everyday household wear on account of their durability, and because they are by far the greatest value for money.

HERCULES is also sold by the yard for making up.

OUR GUARANTEE.

Every genuine Hercules Garment bears the "Mother and Child" ticket, and is guaranteed. Should any Hercules Garment prove unsatisfactory in wash or wear your draper will at once replace it FREE OF CHARGE.

Most Drapers stock "Hercules." If yours does not, please send to us for patterns.



"Mother and Child."

JOSHUA HOYLE & SONS, LTD.,
Spinners and Manufacturers,
MANCHESTER.

(Wholesale and Shipping only supplied.)

NOSTROLINE

TRADE MARK REGD

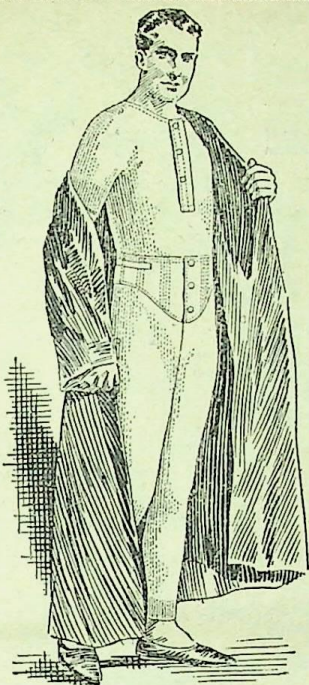
A POLICEMAN IN THE PASSAGE.

A certain householder expected a visit from thieves. A policeman was concealed in the passage— he got them. Your nose and throat are the passage by which germs of disease, such as Influenza, Catarrh, Head Cold, and even worse diseases, enter your body, to rob you of health. You inhale them with the air you breathe—can't avoid doing so. Place a little NOSTROLINE in your nostrils and sniff it up into the air passages. It will act like the policeman and very quickly dispose of disease germs. Use it freely in trains, trams and places where people meet and the air is contaminated. Costs 1/3. All chemists keep it, or can easily get it for you.

In case of delay send P.O. or Stamps, 1/5, to
NOSTROLINE LABORATORIES, 727 CLIFTON, BRISTOL.

NOSTROLINE

TRADE MARK REGD



Nothing annoys a man more

than underwear that continually irritates and teases the skin.

Yet he needs pure wool underwear for Winter.

In Jason he finds satisfaction.

Jason does not tickle even when new.

The pure wool has undergone a special finishing process which results in a softness that is soothing to the tenderest skin.

Jason
ALL-WOOL UNSHRINKABLE
UNDERWEAR

**Drapers and Outfitters Everywhere
for Ladies, Children and Men**

For those who desire a lower-priced underwear the "Olympic" Brand has been introduced, which carries exactly the same guarantees regarding value and satisfaction as Jason.

Jason Underwear Co., Leicester
Sole Manufacturers. © J.5.

The Premier Pastime for the

COSY CORNER

NOVLART! A stencil process without paints or knowledge of drawing. Charming results. Send stamp for specimen Novlart post card.

Complete Outfits—2/4, 4/3, and 8/3

HARBUTT'S PLASTICINE, Ltd.,
30 Bathampton, Bath.

Do You Want a Trained Man's Position?

The *trained man* is the man in touch with the chief.

He is also first in line for promotion.

You can be the man "in front." It is all a matter of having the right knowledge that will put you ahead of the other fellow. "But it is too late," you say. "My age is against me. I have long hours; my income is small and I have too much on my mind."

Then *You* are the very man the International Correspondence Schools can help.

For 31 years the I.C.S. have been training men for better positions. No matter how old you are or how little time you can spare, the I.C.S. can train you in your own home to become a specialist in some particular line of work.

Mark and send this coupon. It brings you all the necessary information, and you are under no obligation.

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2 International Buildings, Kingsway, London, W.C.2
Please send me your booklet containing full particulars of the Course of Correspondence Training before which I have marked X. I assume no obligation.

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	...Dressmaking and Millinery

NOTE.—The I.C.S. teach wherever the post reaches, and have over 300 Courses of Study. If, therefore, your subject is not in the above list write it here.

Name.....

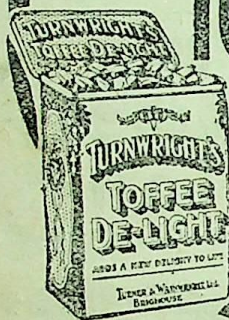
Address.....

Sweetmeat Enchantment

THE remembrance of the delicious taste of Turnwright's demands further and continued acquaintance. The creamy, softening deliciousness of this grand confection keeps your mouth and thoughts happy. Have happiness unstinted. Where Turnwright's is, happiness reigns.

A Thrill of Delight with Every Bite.

TURNWRIGHT'S "TOFFEE DE-LIGHT"



Sold in daintily wrapped pieces, and in tins. Obtainable from all confectioners. If any difficulty is experienced we will send 1/- or 2/- tin post free on receipt of remittance.

FREE AND POST PAID.

Send a post card (postage 1d.; if envelope is used postage 1½d.) for a delightful series of coloured flower and natural history cards. Mention Cass, Mag.

Makers: TURNER & WAINWRIGHT, Ltd.
(Dept. A), BRIGHOUSE, YORKS.



6^{d.}
per
1/4 lb.

Imperial HOTEL

Russell Square London

Central. 1000 Rooms.
Orchestra Daily.
Finest Turkish Baths.

National HOTEL

Upper Bedford Place London

500 Rooms with hot and cold water, Bath, and Attendance. NO TIPS 5/-

Weldon's LEATHERCRAFT

One of Weldon's
Sixpenny Series

Useful hints on making Gloves,
Handbags, Slippers, etc.

6d.: by post 7d. from Each article Fully Illustrated.

WELDON'S, Ltd., Southampton Street, W.C.2



GRANT'S MORELLA CHERRY BRANDY

SOLD IN BOTS & 1/2-BOTS.
IN TWO QUALITIES—

SPORTSMAN'S (Dry), QUEEN'S (Sweet)

For more than a century Grant's Morella Cherry Brandy has enjoyed a world-wide fame, and connoisseurs acknowledge that this delicious combination of fine old Brandy and the matured juice of the English Morella Cherry is still pre eminent amongst all the world's liqueurs. It gives new life, new strength, new joy to all who drink it. Therefore, ask for Grant's Morella, and take no other.

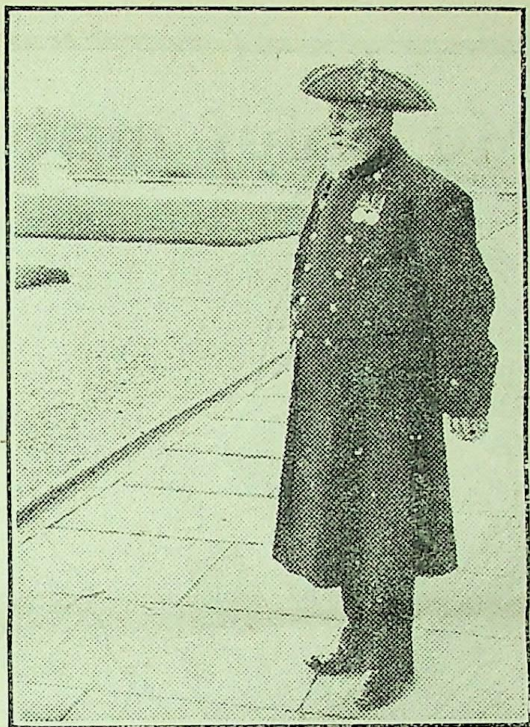
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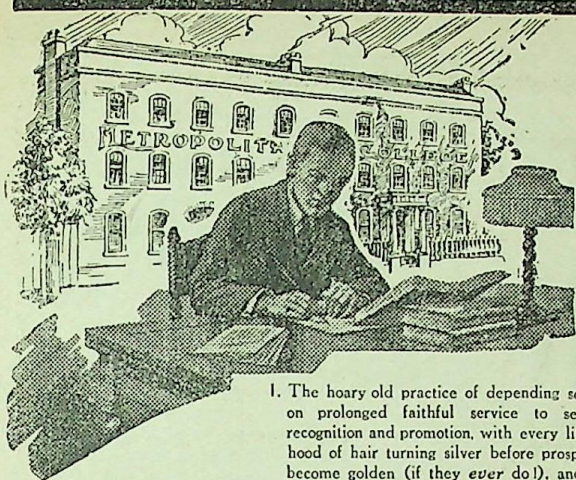
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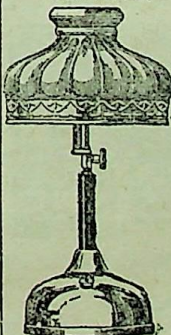
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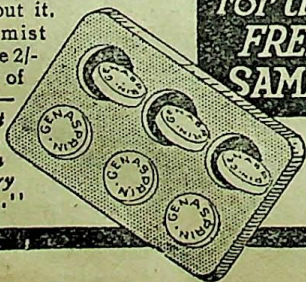
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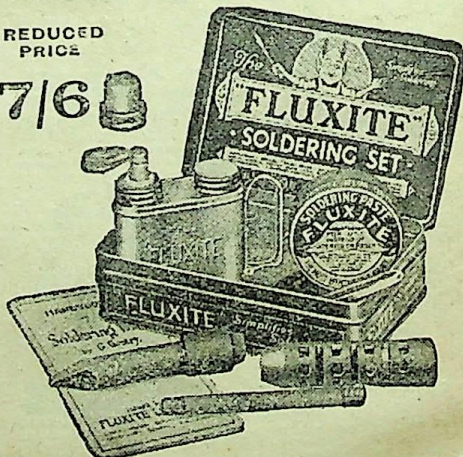
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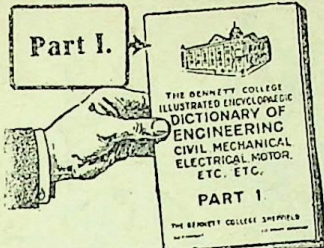
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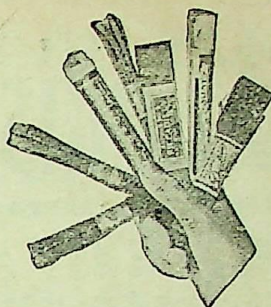
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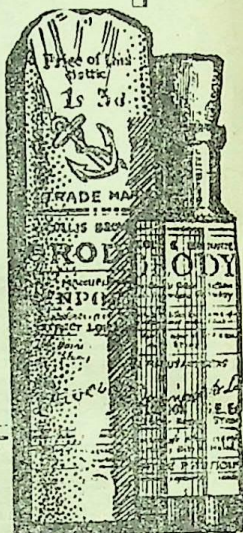
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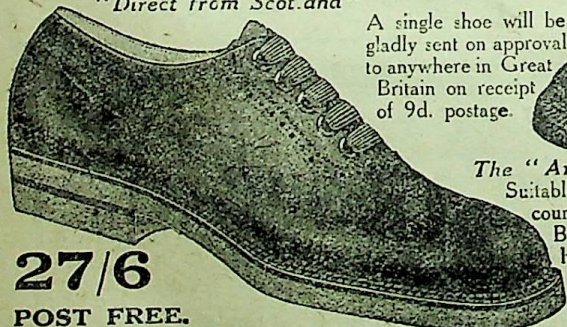
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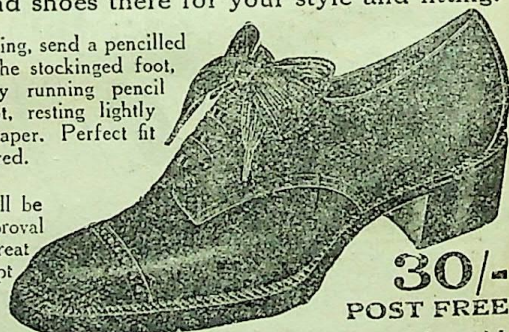
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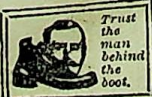
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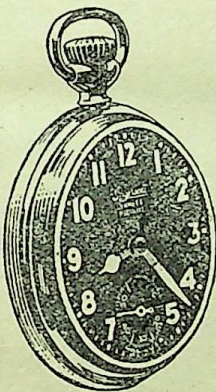


Cassell's Magazine of Fiction

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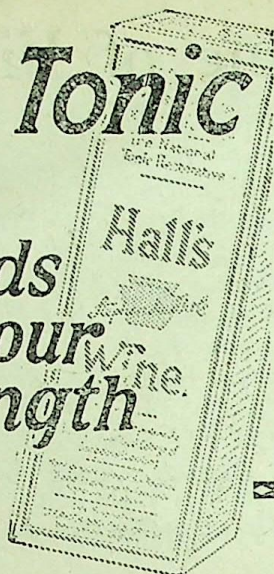


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No. 140

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(NEW SERIES)

LOVE OF WOMEN

By ROSITA FORBES

STELLA MORDAUNT sat on the window-sill with the spring sunshine pouring over her and the hum of London rising like the drone of a monstrous hive. Outside, the cars swung into Berkeley Square with a clash of badly changed gears—someone was having a party, where a strip of carpet ran across the pavement—and an irresponsible wind lifted Stella's hair and played with its ruffled darkness. Inside the golden room, with its stiff taffeta frills that made every chair look as if it were a curtsying dame from a Fragonard canvas, a maid moved so silently that the woman by the window started when she was addressed:

"Will you wear your new Patou, madam, or will you keep it for something smart?"

The voice jarred into a hundred dreams and they fled, scattering in rainbow wisps across the square. Stella fancied that she could see the last gleam disappearing where the trees thickened round the broken statue. She blinked reproachfully at the solid figure which held up something palely lilac, incredibly soft and trailing.

"No, I will wear it. Quick, help me to dress now!"

The girl—she was scarcely more, in spite of the shadows which blurred her grey eyes and made them look too large for the small, pointed face—sprang to her feet and began struggling with hooks and eyes. The maid's disapproval deepened. She had never known her mistress so nervous. There came an exclamation and the whisper of torn silk. "Damn!" said Stella under her breath. Her glance leaped to the clock, a gilt trifle with figures which beat the hours on a gong shaped like the world. She must not be

late. George did not like being kept waiting. And of course she must wear the lilac frock, for what greater occasion could all her life offer her? Surely George would propose to-day? For what other reason could he have suggested this long, gently intimate hour that was neither afternoon nor evening? He was to take her to the Darwells' party later—oh, so much later; but first they would sit in her drawing-room with the deep-cushioned, rose-red chairs, each one so comfortable that it was, at once, a protest against activity and an invitation to all the unsaid, half-formulated thoughts that tantalize and stimulate. There would be flowers everywhere—the pale, heavy-scented flowers that Stella loved. The clock struck, and a faint flush crept up into her cheeks. Her heart began to beat painfully. With a gesture of abandonment which horrified her maid, who was standing back to admire the effect of a great Parisian's masterpiece, Stella flung out her arms.

"Oh, if there were no horrors in the background!"

Frightened, she glanced at Symonds, but the woman's face was impassive.

"It's all right. You can go now."

Mrs. Mordaunt bit her lip fiercely as the maid moved slowly about the room.

"It doesn't matter, you can do that afterwards," she reiterated, trying to keep her voice calm. The door shut at last, and with a swift rush Stella was on her knees by the glass, gazing at her reflection as if she would wrench a secret from it. Her panting breath blurred the image, and she rubbed the mirror impatiently. What she saw was a passionate, wistful face, with a mouth so curved and red that it seemed to have absorbed

all the life of its frail owner. It was a wonderful mouth, and women, looking at it, asked what Mrs. Mordaunt's past had been, while men wondered—and hoped—about her future. There was silence in the room and shadows began to creep out of the corners.

"I must tell him," said Stella suddenly, and the words, spoken aloud, had something odd and portentous about them in that over-luxurious setting. "Before he speaks—it won't be so difficult then." The woman in the glass took on a mocking aspect. "You will cheat yourself of the best moment of your life, the moment you have longed for through so many patient months; for if you tell him he will *never* speak."

Stella shivered. How cold these May evenings were!

"Afterwards then——" she stammered. "I will tell him afterwards, when I am sure he loves me!" The ghost of a smile twisted the mirrored mouth. "Oh, he loves you right enough! There's no doubt about that. The question is, will he marry you?" Surely there was a devil in the room, or was it in her own heart? Stella dropped her head on her arms. "I love him so. I must have him," she murmured, rocking herself to and fro. "At any price?" asked the sprite in the mirror, but there came no answer from the woman huddled on the floor.

Sir George Thorpe was accustomed to handling delicate situations. Looking back over a singularly successful career in the Diplomatic Service, he came to the conclusion that he could just congratulate himself on the way he had manipulated not only incidents, but events, to suit his purposes. Nevertheless, he was conscious of most unusual nervousness as he mounted Mrs. Mordaunt's staircase behind a butler whose air of discretion was exaggerated. For the first time in his life he was uncertain as to his intentions—well, perhaps it wasn't the very first time, but that other affair was so long ago now—old and forgotten and——Sir George, standing by a fireplace banked with lilies, stopped at this point in his musings. He wondered why he had remembered his one poor little romance which had come to such a terrible ending. His eyes wandered round the grey-walled room, and rested on a Buddha, set high on the top of a lacquer cabinet, flanked by Temple lamps of bronze. With an excla-

mation he stepped forward to look at it closer; and then the door opened, and with the entrance of Stella Sir George forgot everything except her beauty and his imperative need of it.

"My dear, it is untold years since I saw you—how long a week-end can be!"

Their hands met and clung, and a swift current of excitement ran from one to the other.

"Was it horrid at Pendlehurst? It is always so stiff and solemn down there. I was terrified——" Stella spoke without thinking, conscious only of the necessity of speech to hide her embarrassment, but the man looked at her sharply. How did she know the historic castle of the Lancashire's—she, a newcomer to London, a cosmopolitan bird of passage building temporary and strangely secluded nests in Rome, Paris or Vienna, but never before in her own country, according to the statement by which she explained her loneliness and lack of friends.

There were always two George Thorpes. One was an oddly sensitive and chivalrous person who did not talk about women, a lover of beauty in all its forms, with an infinity of inconspicuous kindness. The other had just been appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to a Court which was the acknowledged stepping-stone to Paris, a hard man and ambitious, but one who had never made a mistake, a curious mixture, since he had the reliability of an automaton and the vision of genius. It was the potential ambassador who wondered for the hundredth time exactly who Mrs. Mordaunt was, while the man gazed at her ardently and noted the way the blue vein in her throat seemed to have bruised the extraordinary whiteness of her skin. He averted his eyes sharply. That vein was particularly troubling. It lost itself in laces somewhere above a heart which he knew was beating as tumultuously as his own. His voice was a little thick.

"Stella, you're maddening to-day! How can a man help it, you witch-woman? What are you made of, lady of my heart? You are all I have dreamed of in a woman, all I have longed for and thought unattainable——"

The incoherent words broke off, and it was in the voice of a boy that George Thorpe continued: "I am afraid." The light was full on his face, a little burned by Eastern suns, seamed with lines that wrote the history of difficult years, yet

vivid and alert from the crisp grey hair at the temples to the formidable jaw with its betraying cleft.

Stella caught her breath. "Don't be afraid!" she whispered. "Don't cheat us both of something wonderful."

A flame of colour swept up from her throat, but her eyes were steady, in spite of the suffocating pounding in her ears. She had so longed to hear this note in his voice, had listened for it, imagined it, despaired of it, and now it was really there. For a moment the ghosts were forgotten. There was no past. She was the incarnate spirit of womanhood waiting to give her all to the one man.

It was no wonder that even the minister lost his head.

"You do care, Stella! God! You wonderful, beautiful woman! My woman."

She was in his arms now, her head tilted back, his lips on hers, crushing them, kissing them, murmuring love words which shook her with joy akin to pain. How long the world was shut out she did not know. Her head had found the hollow that had surely been waiting for it since the world began. Her mind was drugged with happiness, her starved senses rioting in triumphant passion. Then, quite suddenly, she came back to reality.

"You belong to me now, every thought and wish and hope. I want to know everything about you, the least little thing—why you love these pale, elusive colours, why your hair curls in just that way behind your ear, the name of the scent you use, the quality of the thoughts you think, beloved! In fact, why you are you at all! Tell me all about your wonderful, adorable self."

It was the lover who spoke, and he held her close against him and his breath was warm on her forehead as he kissed her eyelids down, but something cold tingled through Stella, drying her lips, freezing the words that trembled on them. He had not spoken of marriage. Passionately she flung herself against him and lifted her mouth to his. She must be sure of him first. She would wrench this one supreme gift from life which had trampled on her.

"There is no separate me any more now. I have ceased to exist. It is you, only you. I did not know what love could be—how can you ask words of me now?"

He gathered her wholly into his arms,

and there was a long silence while it was given to a man to taste a woman's soul through her lips. Then the clock struck, and each stroke seemed to deal a separate blow at the world of unreality in which Stella was entrenching herself.

Sir George's arms relaxed, and the woman was conscious of the inevitable anti-climax which follows any great moment. Searching for words to defeat it, she found the only possible ones were the confession which she would at all costs postpone. She put her clenched hands to her mouth to stop the rush, and it was the man who broke the silence.

"I shall never be able to go to the Darwells' to-night; I should want to tell everyone—to shout out that you love me. Dear, my dear, do tell me, is my smile—I simply can't stop it, it's fixed for life!—too smugly fatuous? How I have laughed at obvious love! This is my punishment."

He bent swiftly, and turning her hands palm upwards kissed them one by one. With a whimsical smile he looked up at her.

"Well," he laughed, "is there anything more to be said? I am waiting for your answer."

Pain cut into the woman till she blenched. So he did want to marry her and there was no triumph about it at all, for of course she must tell him at once. How could she ever have hesitated? she asked herself wildly.

Very quickly she pulled her hands away, and her voice was harsh because she could scarcely keep it from trembling.

"Yes, there is something terribly important to say. I have got to tell you something."

Inborn pride, the heritage of her stalwart race, sent her head up, and with the idea of gathering her defences round her she moved away from him.

"Don't look so—so different," pleaded the man, wholly lover now, and afraid, as all lovers are, of the intangible thing that may shatter their idols.

"Perhaps you also will be different when you hear who I am," said Stella quietly.

Then George Thorpe knew that the uneasiness, the half suspicions which had tormented him during the past months were about to be justified, and his other self began to reassert itself, but hesitatingly and half-ashamed, so that his efforts

to regain their intimate moment were still spontaneous and warm.

"Don't make it more difficult," urged Stella. "I wanted not to tell you, but I love you too much." She paused for a second and looked at him as if it were the last time she would ever see him. Then: "Do you remember the Fitzmaurice divorce case six years ago?"

Sir George, conscious of something held at bay, it seemed by a physical effort, was horrified by the pictures which flashed across his brain. It had been a *cause célèbre* because of the position of the petitioner, a statesman who was supposed to have a great future before him, and the newspapers had revelled in the sordid details. "Hairpins in the bed!" He could not get the horrid headline out of his mind.

"Yes, I was Mrs. Fitzmaurice," said Stella very gently. "Ah, you are remembering, now you *do* look different!"

For once even the minister was bereft of words. The story was coming back to him—a young wife who had left husband and child with an altogether unworthy lover. The child had died. That made it worse, of course, for people had spoken of neglect. Oh, damn it all! It was exaggerated, no doubt, but the man had thrown her over, and it was presumed, from his careless talk, that she had soon found a substitute. What a wife for a diplomat!

Sir George pulled himself together suddenly, with the feeling that a cold douche had been shot at him. After all, he had never asked her to marry him. Whew, what a narrow escape! Yet all the time his mind was reassuring and adjusting, his heart was clamouring for its mate. And she stood so still, this pale dream-woman in her greying draperies, saying nothing, just looking at him. Why didn't she speak? Surely there must be some sort of a case on her side? Sir George began to feel irritated, but his training stood him in good stead.

"Why do you call yourself Mordaunt?" he asked, striving to recapture the normal, commonplace atmosphere of life, but Stella noticed the change in his voice.

"An uncle left me money on condition that I took his name," she said, and stopped because the tears were hard in her throat. There was so much she might have said. She could have told of a warm-hearted child married from the school-

room to a man twenty-five years her senior, a child who was so proud of putting up her hair for her wedding that she had no thought for a bridegroom who talked of things she did not understand, when he troubled to talk at all. There was a honeymoon which taught the meaning of fear to a girl who had ridden the stiffest country in England on half-broken thoroughbreds. There was the long humiliation of knowing herself a failure, and the year when, though she lived in the same house with him, her husband never spoke a word to her, but sent her messages through the servants. There were months of sickness when she dragged herself through an election, and was told at the end that she had decreased her husband's majority by her lack of enthusiasm. Then the baby came, and with it a revival of hope. It was so wonderful to have something warm and lovable and responsive of one's own, but it was a girl, and when, after weeks of illness, the doctor said she would probably never have another child, her husband stood at the bottom of the bed and spoke to her as she had not known men could speak to their dogs. She was so young still, only twenty, and she had come from a happy-go-lucky, affectionate family, who had taught her the need of love and companionship. She tried to live alone, devoted herself to her baby, and pretended that nothing else mattered, but her husband had installed a hard-featured dependant as nurse, and soon she was told that she was making a ridiculous fuss about the child, and must limit her visits to the nursery. The old Stella would have rebelled, but the girl who crept up the great staircase as if, from physical weariness, she could never reach the top, had lost her old courage. She submitted, and the inevitable happened. There came into her life a man who was young and good-looking and hot-blooded, who, because he desired her, appeared kind and considerate and sympathetic—all that her husband was not. They were friends, apparently comrades. They laughed and danced and rode together, and then one day they kissed. A prying servant reported the incident, and the scene which followed drove Stella out of the house. For days afterwards, in the little inn on the Devonshire coast where she had taken refuge, she could feel her cheeks tingling with the shame of the accusations which had been hurled at her,

and when her would-be lover joined her she was clay in his hands. Distraught by conflicting emotions she listened while he wove a paradise of words, telling her that her husband would be only too glad to be rid of an unwanted daughter, that she had only to be brave and trust him to find love and happiness and her child all waiting for her together. Small wonder that she gave in at last to one whose lip service had been perfected by much experience.

And then, after a week or two had passed and the rifts of the walls of the promised paradise were visible, in spite of all her determination to ignore them, Stella heard that her year-old daughter was ill. In defiance of her lover she rushed back to the north-country house where the little girl was alone with the nurse, was denied admittance by her husband's orders and sought shelter in the village, from which she could creep up each day to ask for news. Even now Stella could not bear to think of those awful hours when the report had been bad and she had waited, half frozen, on a garden seat, till at last the doctor had taken her away, almost by force, and explained that there was no more need for hope or fear. Stella had been very ill in the little whitewashed hospital, and then she had gone abroad, wandering from country to country, always alone, always afraid of meeting old friends who would arouse the intolerable pain of memory, till she had met George Thorpe on a homeward-bound liner, and for his sake, though she pretended to herself it was because she was tired of travelling, had taken a house in London.

All this she might have said to the man who a few minutes ago had held her in his arms and called her his own, a very part of him. How terribly separate human beings were really, thought Stella, and moved with such sudden protest that her sleeve swept a Dresden figure from its stand.

Sir George bent to pick up the fragments. Holding them in his hand he looked at her gravely.

"That is rather symbolical, don't you think? But don't let us break anything more precious than china."

"Is there anything to break?" asked the woman in a voice which she tried to keep light.

"You know there is, child! Forgive

me if I have hurt you, but it is a pretty big thing to me, and I wish you had told me before. I wouldn't have——"

"You haven't!" cut in Stella bitterly.

Sir George took no notice.

"I wouldn't have minded so much because the whole story must be very different. I want to know it all, dear. Won't you trust me as far as that?" He went on speaking gently, kindly. He took her hand and drew her down on to the sofa, even put an arm round her, but Stella felt that they were no longer together—inside life, as it were. He was speaking as an onlooker. All his tact and consideration could not hide the change in his point of view. Nevertheless, she told him something of her married life, and Sir George's pity swelled till, for sheer desire to comfort, he wanted to kiss the tired grey eyes, but he had always put career first, sacrificing everything for it in a spirit that was not altogether selfish. An imperialist in the widest sense of the word, believing that work was the only justification of existence, he could not contemplate a marriage which would limit his sphere of usefulness. Perhaps he had been blinded, less by experience than by achievement, but as he listened to Stella's halting, often incoherent speech, it did not occur to him that there was any decision involved. Underneath his grave compassion surged a storm of feeling, but he would not let the woman see how much his renunciation cost him. He began to tell her of his life, of the work he had done, of his successes, but still more of his failures. He spoke of the need of men in a service cramped by tradition, of all that remained to be done, of his hopes for an entente between England and a certain intractable Power. Perhaps he was trying to show the futility of human love where diplomacy is concerned. Perhaps he was trying to convince himself, to still the pain which raged like a living thing.

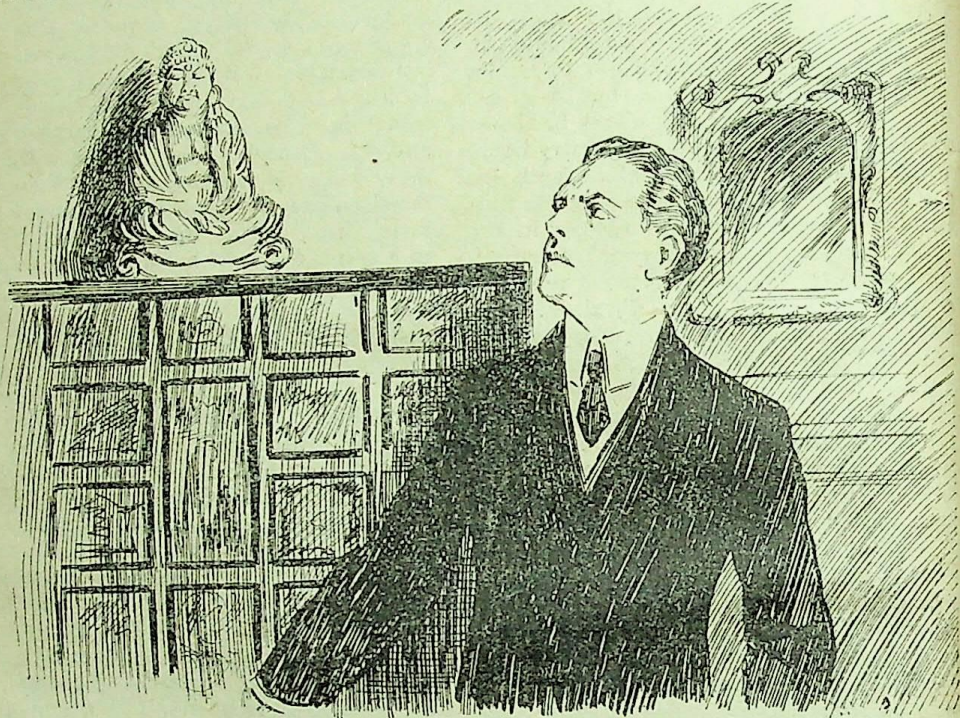
Stella was very quiet. She listened and was grateful because he raised the question to such a level, but all she really cared about was to touch him, to be near him. Surely he would not take that away. She needed him so terribly. All her castles were shattered, but, at least, his arm was round her. Surely he would not leave her altogether!

A telephone bell whirled from an inner room, and reluctantly Stella rose to

answer it. She looked back at the farther door and saw the man silhouetted against the fading light, very erect, with something defiant in the set of his head. She sighed as she closed the door very softly.

George Thorpe walked up and down the room with unseeing eyes. He wanted Stella, and he would not let himself have her. Passion and strength of will fought out their battle, and when the former was conquered there came a great wave of tenderness which shook all his resolution.

Sir George, standing on tiptoe, ran his finger along the crack and round the back of the figure as if in search of something familiar. Then he stepped back with head lifted, while memory went whirling into the past—a decade and more ago, to the days when he had made his first sacrifice on the altar of convention. Long he stood as if in a trance, while the breeze rustled the petals of the lilies and the hum of the faraway traffic gathered volume for its evening pean. Then he



Sir George stepped back with head lifted, while memory went whirling into the past—

With hands clenched he came to a standstill. The room was almost dark. What a long time Stella was talking. Perhaps she wasn't coming back at all. What was she doing—was she crying, poor child! With a gesture of desperation he pressed down the nearest electric switch. The bronze lanterns leaped to light on either side of the Buddha. Sir George caught his breath and stood motionless, staring up at the slender-waisted figure with the spike to signify the flame of life on its head, and one long hand dropping downwards in token of mercy. The jewel in the forehead was blistered, and a great crack seared the faded red and gold of the pediment.

switched off the light and went quietly out of the room.

Stella heard the front door slam as she crouched on her bedroom window-seat, watching the lamps twinkle into pale life still at war with the day, and she buried her aching head in the pillows and said:

"I will not think. I must have peace for a few minutes—just cessation of feeling. I can't bear any more pain." And, in mockery of her protest, her thoughts spun round and round in ceaseless torment. Love was so new, so overwhelming. She dare not lose it. She had never loved anyone before, so she had no measures for this strange, wild tur-

bulence that broke her on the wheel of her own passion. She could not live if she were never to see George again, and with the thought came her first touch of peace, for, after all, why need she live? Death must be infinitely easy compared to the unending difficulties of life. Her mind went groping down strange alleys, finding a drugged content in the thought that here at last was a way out. Sound jarred against her ear-drums while she lay spent with the storms of her nature,

Stella hardly listened to the words because her heart was so busy registering the tone. Warmth stole through her as she hung up the receiver, and she glanced furtively at a mirror to see a scarlet flame staining the white blur that was her face, and eyes which seemed to have burned their way back into her head. Without looking at herself again, she flung off the lilac frock, which she felt was responsible for some of her unhappiness, and laid rough hands on the first



—a decade or more ago, when he had made his first sacrifice at the altar of convention

which fought suffering by instinct; but it was the telephone bell ringing beside her bed. The noise irritated her at last, and she went across the room, dragging her feet, and took up the receiver.

George Thorpe's voice spoke to her, and it sounded so near and so reassuring that her heart gave a great leap.

"Stella, we won't go to the Darwells's. It's impossible, isn't it, but I must see you again. I have got a story to tell you. I may come round after dinner, mayn't I?"

There came a murmured answer, and the man's voice continued: "Yes, you must eat some dinner, promise me, child! I shall be so unhappy about you——"

dress that the wardrobe offered. It was primrose yellow, a laughing thing with sunshine in every cunning fold, but Stella did not notice as she struggled with unaccustomed hooks. She couldn't bear to have Symonds in. She wanted to be alone, alone with her thoughts and with something new and terribly, wonderfully exciting—was it hope?

Hours later, it seemed to her, George came. She was sitting decorously in the morning-room, cushions banked behind her, her chair isolated in a strategic position, but as soon as the door was shut he came to her and with his first words swept away all her defences.

"Stella," he said, not touching her, but

standing over her, so near that she felt her nerves telegraphing their excitement with every pulse of her blood, "I am going to tell you a story that happened a long time ago—I think I had almost forgotten it till I saw your Buddha—and then you must decide if you will marry me."

His voice was so even that it robbed his words of expression, but Stella leaned forward, lips parted, holding her breath lest she should miss a syllable.

"I wonder how you got that Buddha," said the man slowly, "for nearly fifteen years ago it belonged to a little Burmese girl with a white-flower face and a wreath of flowers in her hair—and, yes, she belonged to me. We had loved each other for a long time while I was an inconspicuous third secretary at the Legation in Siam. She was very young and slim and gentle, with huge sapphires in her ears and a mouth like a crumpled rose. She used to smoke absurd thin cigars that were too long for her child's fingers, and I think she cared about only two things on earth—her Buddha and the man who had brought her from her forest village in the far-off Shan states to the little house with the scarlet balconies behind one of the great golden temples of Bangkok. I remember, Stella, there was a boy who used to play a flute in the temple court, and the sunshine used to flood the white mats on which we sat and creep up to the marigolds and rice which Vedeya always placed before 'Gautama the holy one.' We were happy because we were young and she was the first woman for me, and she spoiled me like a mother, and played with me like a kitten, and loved me—God, how she loved me! It made me ashamed and proud and a little frightened. I used to take her on my shooting trips, and always the Buddha came too. We had to have a special pony for him—he was so heavy—and he got that crack across the pediment one day when the little rat of an animal slipped in a bog and brought him down against a rock."

There was silence for a moment. Sir George was seeing visions. He was back in a hot, tired land, where white elephants moved in procession through streets spanned with lacquer bridges and hung with painted lanterns, where houseboats drifted lazily down stream under the shadow of stupas and old walls, relics

of lost empires; where the jungle was curtained with flowers and breathless with scent. He could hear the clamour of the rickshaw bells and the cries of coolies in the crowded bazaars, and he sighed for the glamour of those young careless days.

"Then the change came. Our first secretary was promoted and I had the chance of his job. I was fearfully keen. It was in my blood, I suppose—I had been born to the life. It was 'the service' to me from the time I watched my father put on his gold lace and sword for a coronation in Petrograd. Our minister at Bangkok was an old family friend. A young man, he had done well, and he was ambitious, not only for himself, but for those under him."

Stella shivered a little. She knew what was coming.

"He sent for me one evening and talked pretty straight. You can guess what he said—if I wanted the post I must give up Vedeya. Sounds brutal, doesn't it, but he was right from his point of view. An embassy has to be above reproach."

"What did you do?" breathed Stella, her hands clenched on the arms of her chair.

"Accepted his terms," said Sir George curtly. "Not without a struggle; but I was only a boy after all, just scenting battle, just beginning to taste ambition. It's an enthralling game, ours, if you don't get left in a backwater. The Prince was coming out to Bangkok. It was very necessary that there should be no irregularities about our show. I don't want to make excuses, Stella, but it was either a case of taking a long leave or coming into line."

Again silence fell, and this time the woman was frightened to break it.

"I didn't know how to tell Vedeya, but I think she guessed from the beginning. They have a sixth sense, these Burmans, and they know when sorrow is coming. I used to hear her crooning to her Buddha hour after hour, and I daren't ask what the songs were about. At last I took her up country into the forests. I wanted to have her to myself for a bit, for I was feeling it pretty badly. I remember the night I told her; sitting at the door of my tent she crouched beside me. I explained about my work—my duty I called it—and she stopped me with a hand on my lips. 'I know it all,' she murmured. 'Don't talk

about it. Just take me in your arms.' I lifted her up and held her through half the night, trying to comfort her, promising her everything she wanted in the world, and she lay still and smiled. I don't think she spoke at all, but when I talked of her own people, and her joy at being with them again, she burrowed her head closer against my throat and I couldn't go on. At last I carried her into the tent and I thought she slept."

Sir George had been leaning on the mantelpiece talking as if to some third presence in the room, but now he looked straight at Stella.

"When the moonlight crept across my face I woke and found her gone, but from outside I heard her little wailing song, so I thought she was praying and might find comfort with her gods. I suppose I went to sleep again, for the next thing I remember was sunshine and the anxious face of my servant as he bent over me, shaking my shoulder. The place beside me was empty, and without having understood the man's words I felt unreasoning, overwhelming terror. It rushed over me suddenly—oh, my dear, do you understand? I did as soon as I saw the poor child's Buddha! It was wreathed in datura blossom, the death flowers of her country."

Stella nodded with dry eyes. Her tears were swollen behind the lids, but she could not tell if they were for herself or for the little Burmese girl, who had known the futility of life without love.

"I think I was mad that day," went on Sir George, groping for the slow words which came with difficulty. "I remember nothing but the sun which made my eyes ache, and a useless search—

I think I called her name along the river hour after hour—till at last they came to me and told me that her body had been found far down below the rapids—"

Stella bent forward impulsively. "Oh, my dear, my dear—" The words of sympathy choked in her throat, and she blinked to keep the tears back.

"I don't deserve your pity," said Sir George, but he took her hands, holding them firmly in spite of her movement of withdrawal. "I mixed up price and value once, Stella, but I vowed I would never do it again. Help me, dear, loved woman of mine. Help me—not to forget, but to remember."

One by one the tears splashed over. Stella felt them falling on to her neck, but the man would not let go her hands.

"You must marry me," he urged. "It is such a miracle—I am almost afraid. If I had not recognized the Buddha, I might have gone away in my blind folly—"

Stella remembered her decision as she lay on the window-seat upstairs—how long ago it seemed—and wondered if she would have carried it out with the courage of the Burman girl. With a little cry she slipped forward into her lover's arms, but when he would have kissed her she put up her hands.

"It seems like treachery," she whispered.

Sir George held her closer. "She sent me to you," he muttered between his kisses, "and I will hold you, keep you, my wife."

Hours later, when at last she was alone, Stella gathered all her pale, heavy-scented lilies and piled them before the Buddha.



THE ROAD

INTO the distance drear and dim
Goes the road, and I go, too.
On to the far horizon's rim.
Ever and ever away from you.

Yet howsoever wide we part.
Dawn or dusk, my fond and true,
Ever and ever my constant heart
Backward fares on the road to you!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

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SPECIAL EIGHT-PAGE SECTION IN PHOTOGRAVURE

“THE WOMEN OF CHARLES DICKENS”

CYCLONE

By MARR MURRAY

BIG BILL DAWSON sauntered over to the packing-case which was standing outside his shack and rolled up his shirt sleeves preparatory to opening it. He was puffing steadily at his pipe and humming to himself, with more zest than melody, a music-hall song which was a full ten years out of date.

In all the islands there was no more contented man than Big Bill Dawson. Life gave him everything that he asked. He had health, strength and all the wealth he needed. He would not have exchanged his ramshackle store on Nuku for the most gorgeous palace in the world.

Bill was the only white man on the island, and he earned all he needed trading with the Kanakas. He was saving money too—not because he was of a thrifty disposition, but simply because there was nothing that he wanted to buy. He did not even know how much he had saved. All he cared about was that in Nuku he had found the ideal home. There was plenty to eat, plenty to drink, an ideal climate and an abundance of sport.

What else was there for a sensible man to hanker after? asked Bill. Women? Bill chuckled wisely. Women were like wealth—fine in theory, but a fraud in practice.

It was Bill's considered opinion that there was not a woman in the world worth the worry. Other men might make fools of themselves, but it was best to be woman-proof and carefree like him.

Such was the philosophy of Big Bill Dawson.

"*La de da de doodely do do,*" he hummed with unmelodious gusto. "*Puff, puff,*" went his pipe. "*Crack!*" went the battens of the packing-case.

Having opened the case he sat on the edge and proceeded to examine its contents—knives, hatchets, beads and other "trade."

"Good morning."

Bill's humming ceased abruptly. His pipe hung loosely between his teeth. The voice reminded him of the ripple of a mountain stream gliding on its way

through some shadow-laden forest. Never before had a voice reminded Bill of anything of the sort.

For a moment he blinked, like a man awakening from a dream. Then the knife which he had been examining fell with a clatter into the packing-case. Taking his pipe from his mouth, he stood up and turned in the direction of the voice.

He found himself looking down into two great eyes that were bluer than the sky itself, cheeks that were fair and fragrant as a rose, a tip-tilted nose, hair that gleamed like the dawning sun, arched lips that forced even him, the woman-proof man, to remember that there was such a thing as a kiss.

"Good morning," gulped Bill, not quite sure whether he was awake, or ill, or mad.

The girl smiled—the sweetest smile Bill could remember.

"I'm afraid we rather took you by surprise," she said.

It was then that Bill noticed that she had a companion standing by her side—a man of about the same age as himself. At first sight he seemed handsome, but there was a furtive, sullen look in his rather narrow eyes, a droop at his mouth, and his head hung forward slightly, giving him a vaguely sly appearance.

Bill glanced at him, nodded and then looked at the girl again. In her trim costume of white drill she looked perfect—as sweet and fresh as a rose at dawn.

Big Bill Dawson drew himself up to his full height and squared his great shoulders. He realized that he must pull himself together. For the first time in his life he was being foolish. Why should this girl, an utter stranger, remind him of roses or any other flower? It was twenty years since he had either seen or thought of a rose. Why should this girl seem to him to be perfect, divine? He told himself again and again that she was no different from thousands of other girls, and obstinately refused to listen to his own common sense.

She was different. She was the one girl who mattered.

He would have cursed himself for the biggest fool alive if he had not been so absurdly, bewilderingly happy. It was as if a cyclone had swept him off his feet and whirled him to within hail of Heaven.

Big Bill Dawson did not understand what had happened. He was too astonished. But the truth was that he had fallen in love at first sight. Fate, evidently, had come to the conclusion that it was time to disturb the placid course of his existence.

But Bill was a fighter. He squared his shoulders and told himself not to be a fool.

"I was a bit startled," he admitted in his gruff, unemotional voice. "We don't get many visitors here. Two or three trading schooners a year—that's all."

"We struck a reef," explained the girl. "Luckily it was only a glancing blow. But it started several rivets. So as Nuku was the nearest island we came here to repair the damage."

Bill glanced towards the bay. The steam yacht was the finest he had ever seen. It must have cost a fortune.

He frowned. This wonder girl belonged to the world of those who could afford to pay thousands for a yacht. And he was a happy-go-lucky trader whose only assets were a tumbledown shack, a pair of strong fists and a hundred pounds, maybe.

Again he told himself not to be a fool. What difference did it make to him if she chanced to be a princess, or a millionairess, or a beggar girl?

"I see," he answered in his gruff way.

"So while they're repairing the damage," continued the girl, "my husband and I thought we would come ashore."

Her husband! Bill Dawson blinked as if he had been struck. Involuntarily his fists clenched as he glanced at the sullen, furtive-looking man by her side. A sudden gust of hate swept through him.

Again he told himself not to be a fool. What business of his was it that she happened to be married?

As he nodded there was not a sign of emotion on his rugged features.

"And now," said the girl with a laugh, "perhaps we'd better introduce ourselves. My husband is Ralph Dean, and I'm Edna Dean."

"And I'm Bill Dawson. Will you come in?"

Bill led the way through the store to the inner room of his shack. The girl followed him. Her husband slouched boorishly at her heels.

"It's a bit different from your yacht," said Bill. "But it's good enough for me."

"I think it's lovely," answered Edna Dean, as she gazed around her at the heterogeneous collection of odds and ends with which the room was furnished.

From the packing-case which served as a cupboard Bill produced three enamel cups, a bottle of whisky and a bowl of coconut milk.

"I'm afraid I've only whisky and coconut milk to offer in the way of refreshment," he said. "And I've never had any glasses."

The girl started, a frightened, appealing look in her eyes.

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "We don't want anything!"

Her husband thrust her aside.

"Thanks!" he muttered with quivering eagerness, as he took the bottle and one of the cups in his trembling fingers.

"Ralph! Your promise!"

But the man only chuckled triumphantly as with gleaming eyes he watched the golden liquid flow from the bottle.

With a half-stifled sob his wife turned away.

"Here's luck!" cried Ralph Dean. "Here's the very best!" He gulped down the whisky, draining the cup.

Big Bill Dawson stared blankly, first at the one and then at the other, as he realized that his attempt at hospitality had been a failure. Then he strode over to Ralph Dean, took the bottle from him and replaced it in the packing-case.

He glanced at Edna Dean, wondering what he could do to retrieve his blunder. She was quivering from head to foot; her cheeks were aflame; her eyes brimming with tears.

"I've got a lot of native weapons," said Bill. "I don't know whether you'd like to see 'em?"

To change the subject seemed the only possible thing to do.

She glanced at him gratefully.

As Bill displayed and talked about *u-u* clubs and fish spears a sly look crept into Ralph Dean's eyes. Cautiously he tiptoed across to the packing-case. Scarce daring to breathe, he drew out two bottles of whisky. Then he crept stealthily out of the shack and slunk away into the woods.



"Have you ever guessed what hell's like?" she said in a low, bitter voice

II

It took them nearly an hour to find Ralph Dean. He was lying beneath a bush in a drunken stupor, the two empty bottles beside him.

Bill Dawson picked him up in his arms, carried him back to the shack and laid him on his camp bed.

"He'll come to presently," he said.

Edna Dean stood for a moment gazing down at her husband, a look of contempt in her eyes. Then with a shudder she turned to Bill.

"I'm sorry," she murmured.

"It's me who ought to be sorry," he answered. "Of course I never thought he was—like that."

"That was why we came on this trip," she said. "The doctor suggested that a long sea voyage might cure him."

Bill remained silent. His brain was awl with conflicting thoughts. Hitherto life had always been a simple, straightforward affair. Now it had become bewilderingly complicated.

"I suppose you're wondering why I married him?" said Edna in a low voice.

Bill shrugged his shoulders.

"It's no business of mine," he answered.

"I married him," she said, "because I was a fool. I was poor, he was rich—at least, his people had money. I was young and had romantic ideas; I thought how fine it would be if I could save him. He swore to me that if I would marry him he would be a different man for the rest of his life, that he would not take any more drink. So I married him—for every reason except love. He did reform for a few months, and then—" She shrugged her shoulders and glanced at the unconscious drunkard stretched on the camp bed. "Have you ever guessed what hell's like?" she said in a low, bitter voice. "I know. It's like being forced to live with someone whom you despise and hate."

Big Bill Dawson stood rigid. The sweat was gathered on his brow.

She hated her husband, hated and despised him for the abject alcohol slave that he was. She wanted freedom, happi-

ness, love. And he, Bill Dawson, loved her with all the pent-up passion that had lain dormant in his heart for years. He wanted to seize her in his arms; to tell her that the past was dead, that he would slave to give her all the joy, all the happiness that—

She dashed her hand across her eyes, and with a brave attempt at a smile turned to him.

"Forgive me, Mr. Dawson, inflicting my troubles upon you like this. The fact of the matter is that I was a fool to marry him, and, having been a fool, I must pay the price of my folly. And that's all there is to be said about it."

Bill Dawson drew himself up to his full height. Of course the thoughts which kept clamouring at his brain were grotesque, mad. If he took her in his arms, if he told her that he loved her, she would scream with terror. To her he was merely "Mr. Dawson," the trader who lived on the island of Nuku and whose effort at hospitality had had disastrous results. Within a week she would have forgotten his existence.

For a moment he gazed at her wondering what he ought to say.

"It'll be an hour or more before he comes round," he said at length. "Would you like to look over the island? There's nothing special, but I dare say you'll find a Kanaka village interesting, if you've never seen one before."

"I should like to very much," she answered. "If you're sure it wouldn't be putting you to any inconvenience."

"My time's my own," he said. "But before we start I'll put the whisky out of harm's way, in case he wakes up."

Moving the matting from the floor he lifted a trap-door, revealing a hole about five feet deep. Into this he put the case containing the whisky. Then he replaced the trap and the matting.

"Is that your secret hiding-place?" asked Edna Dean.

Bill shook his head.

"It's in case of a cyclone," he answered. "Anything stored in that hole would at any rate stand a chance of remaining on the island."

Together they wandered through the palm groves towards the Kanaka village. To Edna Dean it was a walk through fairyland.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she exclaimed,

her eyes sparkling. "I never guessed that there could be such beauty!"

Bill nodded. He knew every inch of the island; for years he had lived amidst this prodigal display of beauty. But he also was wandering in fairyland. He was with her; he was watching the light gleam in her hair; he was noting the supple grace with which she moved; he was listening to the soft trill of her voice.

Soon, in a few hours, she would vanish into the unknown whence she had come to him. She was just a dream that would pass. But all his life he would treasure in his memory this walk through the palm groves.

Would she remember him? he wondered.

A grim look came into Bill's eyes as he thought of Ralph Dean. It was torture to imagine her bound to him for life. The impulse seized him to rush back to the shack and throttle his useless life out of the wretch.

"Isn't it funny the way everything seems to have changed suddenly?"

The sound of Edna Dean's voice roused Bill from his reverie. He glanced sharply around him. The world seemed to have changed as if by magic. The joyousness and the beauty had vanished. The air was still and heavy. A spirit of gloom seemed to brood over the island. The birds and animals were hushed, and not a sound broke the deathlike stillness.

"There's a storm coming," said Bill. "We'd better get back."

They turned and hurried back towards the beach.

As they neared the end of the palm groves a distant moaning could be heard.

"What's that?" asked Edna.

"A cyclone," he answered grimly.

"Then——?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It may miss Nuku," he said.

At last they reached the end of the palm groves, and before them lay the bay and the ocean beyond. Every moment the moaning sound was becoming louder and shriller. Away in the east was a great black smudge which every instant seemed to grow darker and larger. The waters of the bay seemed to be writhing in torment.

"Look!" exclaimed Edna.

Midway between the beach and the steam yacht a boat was battling its way towards the vessel. In the stern could be seen the figure of Ralph Dean.

"They've come ashore to fetch him,"

said Bill. "They dared not wait any longer for you. They've no time to waste as it is."

"What are they going to do?" she asked quickly.

"Make for the open sea. If that yacht were caught in the bay it would be smashed to splinters. Their only chance is in the open."

Tossed hither and thither by the waves the boat fought its way inch by inch towards the yacht. Every moment the shriek of the approaching cyclone grew louder, the gloom deeper and the waves angrier. At last the boat was alongside, and Ralph Dean was half lifted, half thrown, on to the deck. Then the crew scrambled on board.

A few moments later the yacht, the smoke belching from her funnel, began to move across the bay. As she emerged from the shelter of the shore she seemed to stagger for an instant. Then she plunged forward in her attempt to escape from the onrushing doom.

Edna stood gazing upon the scene. Her cheeks were blanched and her eyes wide. She was trembling from head to foot.

"What do we do?" she asked.

"Climb to the top of the tallest and stoutest palm we can find," answered Bill, "and hope that it's strong enough to bear the strain and tall enough to keep us out of reach of the waves. There's nothing else we can do. Anyhow, it's no bigger risk than being on that yacht."

She nodded, and followed him towards a great palm which stood on the top of a small mound.

"This one's as good as any," said Bill. "And the sooner we're at the top the better. You'd better hang on to my shoulders whilst I climb up."

He picked her up in his arms and swung her on to his back.

"Hold tight," he said, "and don't worry."

Foot by foot he swarmed up the trunk until he reached the leafy canopy above. Then, holding Edna by the waist, he swung her round to his side.

"The top of a palm isn't the most comfortable of places, but we'll have to make the best of it. All you've got to do now is to keep smiling and keep your grip."

She nodded.

"I'll do my best to be brave," she answered.

111

With a shriek of triumph the cyclone burst upon the island. The palm seemed to stagger under the shock. The wind screamed. The tumultuous waters of the bay were white with foam. Great waves swept with savage fury over the beach.

Palms bent like reeds. Saplings were uprooted. Trees and bushes were tossed into the air in a wild orgy of destruction.

Bill Dawson's shack collapsed with a crash. Its roof of corrugated iron was whirled up and carried tumbling away.

Shriller and shriller shrieked the wind. Louder and louder thundered the waves as they flung themselves against the island. A million furies seemed to have been loosed upon the doomed world.

Big Bill Dawson and Edna Dean clung to the top of the slanting, straining palm. They were drenched with the spume. The roaring wind thrust them against the palm, then it seemed to be seeking to tear them away in order that it might fling them to the storm fiends. In the shrieking, thundering tumult speech was impossible.

Bill had his right arm round the girl, holding her close to him. Her head was buried against him, as if she were seeking to hide from the whirling death. Her hair streamed against his face. He could feel how she trembled and shuddered.

For what seemed an eternity they clung there. Still the wind howled fiercer and shriller. Still the palm, bending and creaking, withstood the strain. Still the waves mounted higher and higher and flung themselves with ever-increasing force against the island. Then the darkness of the night swept over the tortured world.

Again an eternity passed, and still the battle of the elements grew more and more furious.

Then the great wave came.

Like a great seething cloud of destruction it rushed through the blackness of the night. It dashed upon the island as if seeking to tear it from the ocean bed.

Desperately Bill Dawson clung to the girl and to the palm. The waters poured over them, tugging, tearing, wrenching at them. But Bill held on to the now leafless branches of the palm. Crushed and breathless he battled on, striving to shield from the fury of the elements the quivering form which the storm fiends sought to snatch from his arms

Lower and lower bent the palm before the might of the wave. For a moment it seemed to shudder. Then it snapped. The exultant waters seized it with its human freight. Tumbling, turning, rolling, it

Bill Dawson was sitting astride the broken palm. In his arms he held the limp, drenched figure of Edna Dean. When the violence of the storm had abated she had fallen asleep—the deep sleep of utter exhaustion. Her head was nestling in the crook of his arm. Her hand still rested upon his shoulder.

Motionless as a statue he sat,



A million furies
seemed to have
been loosed upon
the doomed
world

sped to the very crest of the wave.

And still Big Bill Dawson hung on, holding the girl close to him.

IV

THE dawn broke, serene and smiling.

The wind had dropped and the waves subsided. Far away could be heard a faint, droning sound. Scattered on the restless waters was the debris of the storm—trees, the roof of a hut, a smashed canoe.

not daring to stir lest he should waken her. In the silver light of the dawn he gazed down at her. Dishevelled and drenched though she was, she seemed more beautiful than ever.

Involuntarily his arms closed tighter

around her, as if he were seeking to hold fast to the present.

She stirred and opened her eyes. For a moment she stared at him in a bewildered way. Then as memories of the cyclone came back to her a shudder swept through her.

Bill smiled down at her.

"Feeling better?" he asked. "The storm's finished. There's nothing to be afraid of now. We're alive, and that's the main point."

"Where are we?"

"Still on the same old palm," he answered. "We're about three miles from Nuku, I should say."

She sat up and gazed around at the tossing waves.

"That's Nuku," said Bill, pointing to the shadow which was slowly emerging from the dispersing darkness.

"But how are we going to reach it?" she asked. "Won't we drift away from it?"

"I'm going to swim the distance and tow the palm with you on it."

She gazed at him in wonder.

"But——"

"I've got to do it," he said simply. "It's the only way."

Somehow she seemed to nestle closer to him, and the look in her eyes sent the blood thrilling to his heart.

"The sooner we get to Nuku the better," he said. "I expect you'll be ready for breakfast."

He set her down amongst the torn branches of the palm. Then, having kicked off his boots, he plunged into the waves.

Not one man in a million would have accomplished that swim. But Big Bill Dawson was not fighting for himself alone. With every stroke he knew that he was bringing Edna Dean, the wonder woman who had come to him from the unknown, nearer to safety.

For five hours he battled on. Every stroke was torture to his racked limbs. Every gasping breath seemed to burst his straining lungs. The burden of the broken palm grew heavier and heavier.

"Come on! I'll swim the rest. It's only a few hundred yards!"

He turned to find that Edna was swimming by his side.

She smiled into his dimming eyes.

"Come on! We mustn't be beaten now—Bill!"

At the sound of his name he dashed the spray from his eyes. With a mighty effort he raised himself in the waters and battled on.

With the water streaming from him Big Bill Dawson staggered blindly up the beach. Then the reaction came after the strain and stress of the past hours. He stumbled forward a few paces and then collapsed.

When he recovered consciousness he found himself lying on the sand with his head pillowed on Edna's lap.

For a moment he blinked up at her.

"Better?" she asked with a smile. "Drink some of this. It'll do you good."

Placing her hand at the back of his neck she raised his head and held a bottle to his lips. He gulped at the whisky.

"Where did you get that?" he asked.

"Your secret store," she answered. "The hole under your shack. I found some breakfast for us too—a case of tinned salmon."

He raised himself and stretched his aching limbs.

The island, which but a few hours before had been radiant in its glorious beauty, was now a scene of desolation. Here and there a stark and bent palm remained. The ground was littered with wreckage and lumps of coral torn from the ocean bed. A few Kanakas were wandering disconsolately about seeking their lost ones and food.

"Isn't it awful?" whispered Edna with a shudder, as she followed Bill's glance.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"In a couple of years nature'll have repaired the damage. It'll be the same as you saw it yesterday."

They sat down on the beach and ate their breakfast of tinned salmon.

Neither spoke a word.

Bill's eyes were fixed upon the horizon. He was wondering what had been the fate of the steam yacht and her husband.

It was impossible for the yacht wholly to have escaped the cyclone. The chances were that it had been flung upon a reef. Perhaps it was a hundred or more miles away, a helpless derelict. Perhaps——

And in the meantime he was here on the island with Edna. Suppose the yacht never returned? Was it possible that—— He glanced at her, not daring to complete the question.

He was a fool, he told himself. She was too beautiful, too divine for him. She belonged to a completely different world. He could never be anything more to her than the man who had saved her life.

And yet she had called him Bill when she had plunged into the waves beside him. When consciousness had returned to him he had found his head pillowed upon her lap.

She glanced up and her eyes met his.

"You're very quiet," she said.

"I was thinking," he answered.

She glanced at him inquiringly.

"I was thinking it was rather wonderful," he explained awkwardly. "Yesterday you came to Nuku, out of the unknown, as if fate intended us to go through that cyclone together."

She nodded, the colour creeping into her cheeks.

"And now?" she said in a low voice.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"The yacht 'll come back and you'll go off again—into the unknown."

"And you?"

"I'll start afresh, here on Nuku."

He rose to his feet and stood staring across the sea. For a time she sat watching him. Then she also rose to her feet.

In silence they walked along the beach.

Gently, wistfully, she placed her hand on his arm.

"Suppose," she whispered, "that the yacht doesn't come back?"

He drew himself up to his full height. His fists were clenched. The sweat was gathering on his forehead.

"A schooner'll come sooner or later," he answered gruffly. "It'll take you back to your world."

"My world!" she echoed bitterly.

Fiercely he turned upon her.

"For God's sake don't tempt me!" he cried. "Can't you see that I've loved you ever since the moment I set eyes on you? Don't you realize that I welcomed the risk of death in that cyclone so long as I could hold you in my arms? It's for your sake that you must go back to your world—to London, Paris, luxury. I love you, worship you! You're the most wonderful thing that has ever come into my life. But what have I to offer you? Look around you! Look at the wreckage, the desolation! All I have to offer you is a share of that! Now do you realize why you must—go back?"

She stood before him, trembling.

"Isn't it possible," she whispered, "that you're the most wonderful thing that has ever come into my life? Would you believe me if I told you that I would rather have found death in your arms in the cyclone than have been safe on the yacht—with him?"

For a moment he gazed at her in wonder. Then he seized her by the shoulders.

"Is that true?" he cried hoarsely.

She looked up at him and smiled.

"Quite true—Bill."

His great arms went around her, crushing her to him.

V

ROUNDING the low headland they reached the bay.

In it the yacht, battered as a result of its buffeting by the storm, was swinging at her anchor. A boat containing a search party was already half-way to the beach.

Edna Dean and Bill Dawson stood staring at it.

He could feel her hand quivering in his grasp.

"Bill!" she muttered. "Bill, we must hide! I'm not going back! I can't! Bill, don't let them take me! Hide me anywhere!"

It was too late. A shout came echoing across the waters. The officer in charge of the boat was standing in the stern waving his hand.

Big Bill Dawson stood rigid as a statue, his eyes fixed on the boat. Edna nestled close beside him, as if seeking protection. She was trembling from head to foot. Her hand held fast to his.

The boat grounded on the beach. The officer jumped ashore.

"Thank God you're safe, Mrs. Dean! I'm afraid, though, that I've bad news of your husband. He was delirious after we got him aboard. He broke out of his cabin and went on deck. The cyclone was at its height. It was impossible to save him."

She remained silent. But Bill Dawson could feel her fingers tighten round his. Then with a low cry, half sigh, half sob, she turned and clung to him, the tears streaming down her cheeks.

The officer gaped at them in blank astonishment, hesitated for a moment, then went off to give some orders to the boat's crew.

MEMORIES OF THE NORTHERN CIRCUIT

By HIS HONOUR JUDGE PARRY

I count myself in nothing else so happy
As in a soul remembering my good friends.
RICHARD II, ii, 3.

ARDENT law reformers are wont to scoff at the tenacity with which little towns like Appleby, Rutland and Beaumaris cling to their privileges as Assize towns. There has always in legal matters been a jealous feeling between London and the provinces. In early days every cause had to be tried in Westminster. It was Magna Carta that ordered the judges to ride into every county and once a year hold assizes throughout the land.

But you cannot do justice with judges alone, and so it came about that the judge and his clerk and servants were followed by a stately cavalcade of serjeants and barristers and their clerks and servants, and every summer there set out from London to the four quarters of the country a gallant band of lawyers, bringing with them the message of the King's justice to the farthest corners of his country. In each county the Sheriff would meet these pilgrims of justice, and carry off the judge to a suitable lodging, whilst the Bar distri-

buted themselves in humbler dwellings, meeting daily at the dinner-hour to dine at a common mess.

In this way the Circuits were formed. The Bar who followed the Judge through Devon and Cornwall called themselves the Western Circuit. There were also Midland, Oxford, Norfolk and Home Circuits. But greatest of all in legend and renown was the old Northern Circuit, which included the broad acres and moors and mountains of Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire.

This great Circuit remained intact until 1876, when the North-Eastern Circuit took away Yorkshire and Durham and Northumberland; but when I joined in the 'eighties there were still many barristers

living who on the old circuit, tell you legends of the

had gone and could old days.

From the very earliest the Circuits like the Inns of Court have been centres of

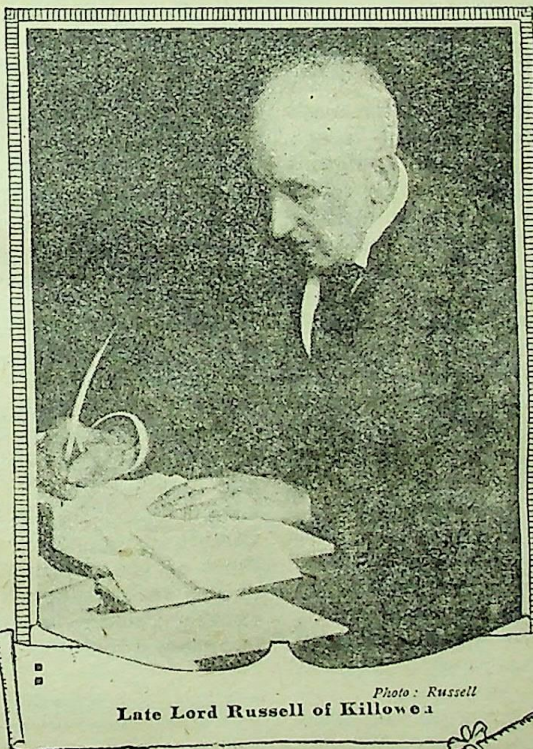


Photo: Russell
Late Lord Russell of Killowen

fellowship, hospitality, and even conviviality. There is a true spirit of fraternity in our oldest trade union that is worthy of emulation among more modern institutions, and it is upon the circuits that this is most worthily exhibited, for here the young idea that joins the Bar is taught to

Do as adversaries do in law,
Strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends.

I do not think I loved the circuit less because at Bar mess there was a certain spirit of joviality and misrule that I found highly congenial and entertaining. No doubt these things were at times carried to too high a pitch, but they had their useful side, and the songs and lampoons and jests of a Grand Night were on the whole a good influence in restraint of selfishness, jealousy and conceit.

Boswell's Writ

There were some, however, who had not the restraint to suffer these saturnalia gladly.

Boswell, for instance, found the members of the Northern Circuit rough and unpleasant company. It is significant that in his great book he never refers to John Scott, Lord Eldon, and it is thought he never forgave him the trick that lively member of the old circuit played upon him at Lancaster. Scott and other circuiters found Jimmy Boswell lying on the pavement very drunk, and took him to his lodgings. The Bar mess then subscribed a guinea for him and half a crown for his clerk, and sent him next morning a brief, with instructions to move for a writ of *Quare adhaesit pavimento*, with observations calculated to induce him to believe that this required much learning. The little Scots lawyer swallowed the bait. He ran round to the attorneys to borrow books, but in vain, and rushed breathless into Court and moved for the writ, quoting learned passages from his brief.

At length the judge in amazement said: "I never heard of such a writ! What is it that adheres to the pavement?"

"My Lord," said one of the Serjeants, "I understand from my learned friends that Mr. Boswell last night *adhaesit pavimento*. There was no moving him for some time. At last he was carried to

bed, and he has been dreaming about himself and the pavement."

Everyone but little Boswell enjoyed the jest.

The Hospitable Attorney

Eldon himself used to tell a curious story of his early circuit days. There was a hospitable attorney at Lancaster named Fawcett who used to entertain the Bar. On one of these occasions Lee said to his junior, Davenport, that he would not leave the wine. Davenport refused to go. Whereupon Lee said: "Now, young Scott, you are with us in the case, you go off and work up the brief, and wait up until we come to consultation."

John Scott, much to his disgust, did as he was told. Presently Jack Lee came in very drunk. "I cannot consult to-night," he said; "I must go to bed." And away he went.

Davenport came in next, and said to the attorney who was sitting with Scott: "We cannot have a consultation to-night. Don't you see how drunk Mr. Scott is?" And he staggered off to bed. The next day they lost the case, the leaders knowing nothing about it. However, they moved for a new trial, and Lee and Davenport paid all the costs out of their own pocket. At the next Assizes, when the case came on, the judge leaned over his desk and asked counsel: "Gentlemen, did any of you dine with lawyer Fawcett yesterday? For if you did, I will not hear this case until next year."

The customs of conviviality have altered, but the hospitality of the north remains. And there were many ancient circuit usages that prevailed in my time, and continue to this day. The ritual of Grand Court is, as the records of the Circuit show, of a very old tradition, some of the customs which still obtain dating back to the Christmas Saturnalia in the Temple, when our Elizabethan ancestors appointed a Lord of Misrule.

Language—Extensive and Peculiar

The calling of a Court is a strange ceremony. The Junior, who is our chief and responsible chairman, orders a Court to be called. The Messenger goes to the door and locks it. The Crier "cries a Court," and then the Attorney-General or Solicitor-General of the Circuit proceeds

to deal with delinquents, and these are "condoled with or congratulated" in the usual manner by paying fines to the wine fund.

There was a legend at Manchester that Fitzjames Stephen had been made Crier on account of his stentorian voice, and had indignantly refused to act because of the ribaldry of the proceedings. The Messenger at the door on command of the Junior refused to let him go, and Stephen threw up the window of the dining-room, which was at the top of the Law Courts, and shouted for the police.

But the lonely officer on duty merely remarked to a citizen who called his attention to it: "It's only them drunken barristers!" and went his way. Stephen moved at a circuit meeting to abolish Grand Court, but the

majority were against him, and the ancient institution still flourishes.

There was certainly even in my early days a coarseness of language that belonged rather to the eighteenth century than our own, and more than one old member of the Circuit could have held his own with Squire Western in savoury Doric. A curious character on the Circuit was George Cooper, whose vocabulary was extensive and peculiar. A scholar and a lover of flowers and dogs, his anecdotes and the language of them were of the age of Chaucer.

He attended Sessions and Assizes to prosecute and, occasionally, to defend prisoners. He had chambers in a single room in Preston, where he kept his bag of robes. He once invited me to enter them—a rare condescension. The room was bare of furniture, except for a glass case such as stuffed fish are kept in over the mantelpiece. This contained the wooden spoon which he had won at Cambridge. In one corner of the room was a stack of bottled beer and stout; in another empty bottles lay in confusion. There were glasses on the mantelpiece.

He flung his robes in a far corner, and we drank the health of the wooden spoon.

George was a kind-hearted fellow, and put some small briefs in my way at Sessions. He liked to talk about books,

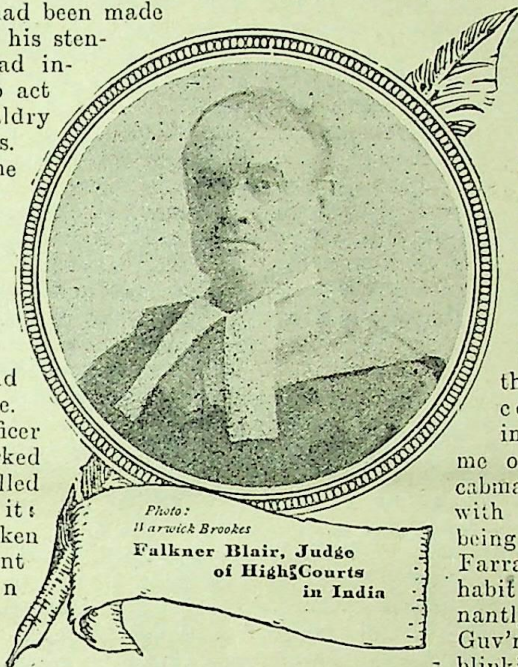
and I kept him to that subject. One day, hearing my wife was ill, he brought me some beautiful roses he had grown, and I could not help saying to him: "I suppose you do not have to manure your rose trees, but just go out and talk to them." He accepted

the idea as a gracious compliment, and immediately reminded

me of the story of the cabman, which he told with advantage, who, being rebuked by Dean Farrar for his terrible habit of swearing, indignantly replied: "'Abit, Guv'nor! 'Abit! It's a blinkin' gift!" And indeed too many of us cherish "'abits" as though we regarded them as gifts.

When I joined the Circuit in 1886 it contained a great race of advocates, and their successors have perhaps in some ways bettered their examples. The style of advocacy in fashion was a bluff businesslike attack on the main point of the case based on the traditions of Holker, who had inherited them from Scarlett. Florid eloquence was at a discount. Charles Russell had just gone special, and Gully was the leader of the Circuit. He was a charming leader, and most patient and considerate to his juniors. I once heard a north country juror say to a companion coming out of Court: "I like to listen to Mr. Gully; he speaks so gentlemanlike." Yet he had considerable strength of fighting force if he could be roused to use it, and a pretty wit of his own. As witness his application to Lord Coleridge at the end of a case for a stay of execution—"in order to consider more at leisure some of your lordship's observations."

Charles Russell was certainly one of the greatest advocates I have ever listened



to, but he relied in great measure for success on overbearing his opponents and the Court by the weight of his personality. His manner and language were at times of the roughest. A solicitor of my day used to relate with some pride his first introduction to Russell. He was an articulated clerk, and his chief, Mr. X., had sent him down to the Assizes at Manchester to deliver to the great man an overdue brief. He found Russell alone in his room, and laid the papers respectfully on the table. Russell looked at them angrily, and with several curses and imprecations on the clerk and his chief and the late hour at which the brief was delivered, hurled it into a corner of the room.

Catching a Tartar

The young man walked to the door, and, turning round, said in the calmest voice: "Mr. X's compliments, and he will be with you at 9.30 to-morrow morning."

Russell shouted to him to come back.

"Go and pick up the damned papers! I suppose I must have a look at them."

Whereupon the young man in emphatic language, following accurately every maledictory precedent set by the great leader, told him to pick the brief up himself, or seek a hotter climate.

But this really pleased Russell vastly. He loved to have someone stand up to him. It was a real luxury to him to be sworn at. He commended the young man in very kindly terms, and paced across the room to where the brief lay. The young man, relentless and courteous, rushed to forestall him. They brought the papers back to the table hand in hand, and Russell afterwards spoke in the warmest terms to Mr. X about the ability of his articulated clerk, and remained his firm friend in the future.

Truly in the house of Advocacy there are many mansions, and an entirely different type of advocate from Charles Russell was John Addison, an excellent defender of prisoners. He was a smiling, stout and courteous cherub, always edging along to the jury box, and nodding and chatting and beaming to the jurors, and wheedling them into the belief that the discovery of the prisoner's innocence was entirely due to their superhuman intelligence. No one could muddle up the affairs of the prosecution with

such skilful irrelevance as Addison. No one could more honestly mis-state the law of the matter—for he was not a great lawyer—and when the judge reproved him, no one could say more effectively "Gentlemen, I am obliged to his Lordship. His Lordship has put in a few clear words exactly what I was trying to say."

Addison had a curious lisp when he came to the letter R that softened his speech strangely. So had our friend Sington, but he managed it quite differently. The latter was prosecuting a man at Preston Sessions for stealing rabbits. Addison defended. "May it please you, sir, gentlemen of the jury," said Sington, opening the case, "the prisoner is charged with stealing yabbits."

"Stealing what?" cried Higgin, the chairman, rather angrily.

"Yabbits, sir," repeated Sington, more loudly.

"Yabbits!" repeated Higgin, with a puzzled look.

"My Lord," said Addison, who always addressed Chairman of Quarter Sessions thus, "My Lord and Gentlemen," he continued, beaming intelligence at every pore, "my fwend means wabbits."

The Wit of Falkner Blair

There was a theory among the juniors that Addison tried to look as big as Sam Pope to attract the attorneys to his merits, but that was impossible. As the Circuit poet sang in the doggerel of the day:

Sam Pope may swagger
Sam Pope may gas
And collar the briefs all day,
But he can't see his knees without aid of a
glass
Because he ain't built that way.

Pope was not only a great advocate, but a most kindly and hospitable man. He did not come circuit in my time, but he was Recorder of Bolton, and was always ready to make an excuse to visit the North. I remember him coming down to preside at a farewell dinner we gave to Falkner Blair, when he was made a Judge in India.

Blair was an eloquent speaker, a far better lawyer than people thought, and had a ready wit. One of his jests is a Northern Circuit classic. He was taking some ladies round the Courts during the

luncheon hour, when they came across a sheaf of antique spears which the Sheriff's javelin men had piled in a corner of the corridor outside the judge's room. "Whatever are those used for?" asked a lady, gazing at them admiringly.

"Those, my dear madam," replied Blair promptly, "are used by the Judge in the Crown Court when he charges the Grand Jury."

Blair was an excellent circuit officer, and there must be many of his sallies on the pages of the Circuit records. I remember a topical alphabet he wrote and recited with great effect, "featuring," as one may say, all the Circuiters. Dr. Pankhurst had just brought an action against the *Manchester Courier* for calling him an atheist, and Blair was ready with the couplet.

P. is for Pankhurst, of whom it's a libel
To say that he doesn't believe in the Bible.

Dr. Pankhurst was very popular among his circuit comrades. He was a keen controversialist, a scholar and a shrewd and witty talker. He was too ready to wound the feelings of religious men by frank discussion of what were to them holy things, but apart from this trait he was an entertaining companion. He would startle the staid elders of Bar mess by telling them that if he had any choice in the matter he would choose "Heaven for the climate, but Hell for the company"—but there was always the flavour of wit in his wildest sayings.

He was not a great or successful advocate. His voice and manner were against him. He was too eager and full of enthusiasm to see any weakness in his own case, and his ungainly gesticulations and shrill falsetto voice at intense moments became almost ridiculous.

As a naughty circuit rhymist wrote in "Blair's Lament on going to India":

When I hear in the midst of the jungle O
The shriek of the wild cockatoo,
I shall jump out of bed in my bungalow
And imagine, dear Pankhurst, 'tis you

Although Pankhurst was much in the world's eye as a social reformer in those days, he cannot be said to have left any permanent mark behind him.

An entirely different character, but a man whose social worth will never be forgotten, was Charles Hopwood, then Recorder of Liverpool. He was one of the wisest and best criminal judges I have ever known. In those terrible days men and women were sent to long terms of penal servitude for trifling offences. It was not that the judges were hard-hearted men, but they had been brought up in a harsh system.

Charles Hopwood, with deeper human insight, showed them their error. When he first sat at Liverpool he referred to the record of a poor woman who had served

twenty-two years' imprisonment for pilfering five or ten shillings' worth of food. He set the example of short sentences, and in spite of clamour and criticism proved that his system did not create

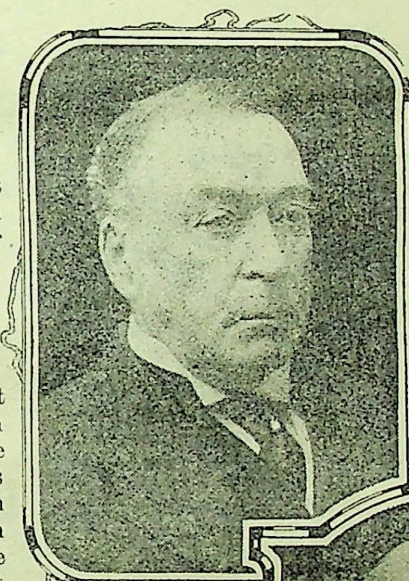
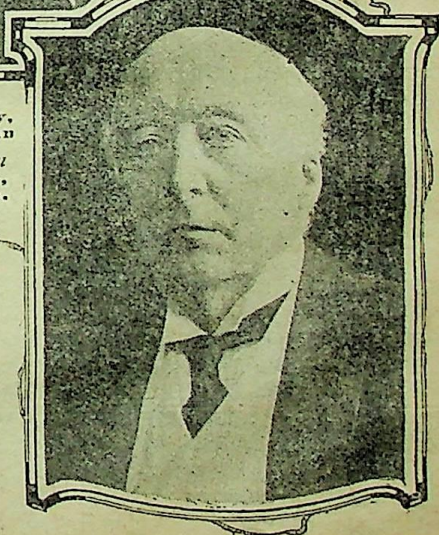


Photo: Russell
Viscount Mersey,
formerly Sir John
Bigham

Photo: Russell
Viscount Selby,
formerly Rt.Hon.
W. G. Gully



more criminals. What converted the world to his views was his statement to the Liverpool citizens that after a few years of office he had saved the community £28,000 in prison costs. It was then that business men saw that there was sound sense in Hopwood's methods, and that as an Irish colleague said, "he has indeed taught us what a beautiful thing it is to temper mercy with justice."

Lord Mersey Scored

Liverpool naturally reminds one of Bigham, more familiar to a modern generation under the title of Lord Mersey, a unique cognomen, I believe, which he is said to have modestly assumed because as he said: "That will leave the whole of the Atlantic for F. E. Smith." It seems strange that I should have left the Circuit before the greatest star of all had dawned, but so it is. Bigham, to my mind, was the best cross-examiner I ever heard. Calm and deliberate in his method, his alert, quizzical eyes gazing through or sometimes over his gold pince-nez, he treated the witness as Izaak Walton tells us the frog should be used when you put the arming wire through his mouth and out at his gills, "and in so doing use him as though you loved him, that is, harm him as little as you may, possibly that he may live the longer."

He had, too, a dramatic instinct for the staging of a case, as it were, and calculated to a nicety the time for bored silence and weariness with an opponent's conduct, or sudden and indignant objection at a question put, or profound and reverent attention to judicial wisdom, or a nod of pleased approval at a juryman's question.

I remember being in a long case at Manchester tried before Gully, sitting as Commissioner. Bigham, Q.C., and I were for one defendant, and Ambrose, Q.C., Bradbury and Sutton were for the other defendants. It was an action brought against the trustees of a building society, and we were all much in the same boat, but our best way out led through the paths of statutory technicality. What an admirable judge Gully would have made! I can see him calm, dignified and courteous dealing with that dreary, wrangling confusion of books and papers. Bigham was too busy to come near the case, but left me in charge with strict instructions

to cross-examine no one, except it were necessary to ensure that certain books and papers were proved. The other counsel fought with plaintiff's counsel, objected to evidence, and cross-examined the plaintiff and his witnesses with great vigour. Every afternoon Bigham would come into the Court and, rising at a pause in the proceedings, coolly propose that as his client took no real interest in the proceedings and had really no case to meet, and as the plaintiff was a poor man, he and I would walk away at this stage and ask for no costs. It sounded very charitable, and the drama of it appealed even to Gully, but it maddened counsel for the plaintiff.

When the plaintiff's case was closed, Bigham popped in again. He referred to a few cases and documents, and in a quarter of an hour his client was dismissed from the suit with costs. Not so the others. They had raised a dust of controversy, and now they had to allay it and emerge into the light again. It took a lot of doing. There was no essential difference between the several defences. "It was the riding that did it," as Palmer said. As we left the little Court, and Bigham looked over his shoulder at Ambrose plunging into a strenuous legal argument to explain his position, he shook his head with a sigh, saying: "Sweet are the uses of cross-examination, which, like the toad—well, you know the rest."

The Elusive "Peark"

A wholly different type of advocate was Shee, and one of the few speakers capable of real eloquence in the defence of prisoners.

He was exceedingly hard-working, but too diffident of his own powers. His face in repose was almost ugly, of an Irish type, with a distinctively aggressive, upturned nose. As a libellous circuit songster trolled out one evening to the old sentimental air:

She held a brief with Moses
The day when first we met;
The unlikeness of their noses
I never shall forget.

But when he warmed to a speech in which his heart was prompting his words his face was transfigured by energy, force

and earnestness, and his eloquence cast a spell on his hearers. No one else quite achieved that in my day except Shee.

He had a pretty wit, too. When Coleridge was puzzled with the Lancashire dialect, he came cleverly to the rescue. The witness had said:

"I tow'd 'im if 'e didn't 'owld 'is noise, I'd knock 'im off 'is—pearck."

"Pearck? Mr. Shee, what is meant by pearck?"

"Oh, pearck, my Lord, is any position on which a man elevates himself above his fellows. For instance, a bench, my Lord!"

Coleridge himself could say a clever thing, especially if it expressed dispraise. He and Henry Wyndham West, the Recorder of Manchester, were not, as the old actor said, "cater-cousins."

"What does West do?" asked Coleridge, in a pitying tone, of an old member of the circuit.

"He is Recorder of Manchester."

"Dear me!"

"And Attorney-General for the Duchy of Lancaster."

"Really!"

"And Judge of the Salford Hundred Court of Record."

"Dear me! Dear me!"

"And prosecuting counsel for the Post Office."

"You don't say so!" said Coleridge, throwing up his head in astonishment. "What a lot of out-door relief the fellow has!"

West had a contempt for Manchester and its commercial ideals, and had a secret idea that all commissions were dishonest. I remember walking up with him from Strangeways one summer afternoon. I can see his tall figure correctly garbed in black, with his white top-hat—the only one in Manchester, I think, except Sir William Cobbett's—striding along with his hands behind him, inveighing against commissions. As he finished he stopped,

and, looking at me sternly, said: "I tell you what it is, Parry. If a Manchester man sold his soul to the devil, some fellow-citizen would sue his executors for a commission on the transaction!"

I was tempted to tell him that both parties would apply by consent that he should be appointed to go down and take evidence on commission, but I amended his name to that of Coleridge, and he smiled approval.

And as I write these words I seem to see the long table with Gully, Hopwood, Henn Collins, McConnell, Charley McKeand, Blair, Shee, Addison, Louis Aitken, and many another old friend and comrade, and I hear the throb of Elia's lament in my ears:

I have been laughing, I have been carousing, Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies, All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

It is a challenging essay to vex the ears of strangers with these twice-told tales of the old circuit. We live in an age which looks askance at the old-fashioned ritual of hospitality and conviviality. To me the old tales are the best tales, and indeed I often doubt whether there are any new tales, when I rehearse the tribal lays of the old circuit. I am probably telling stories that were told of Scott and Eldon in old times, and will be re-told in the ages to come of the Hewarts and Smiths of the future.

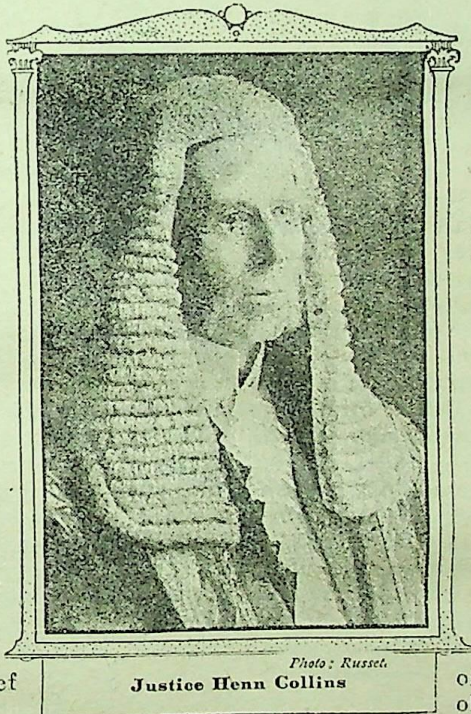


Photo: Russell.

Justice Henn Collins

There must be a stop to these garrulous memories of mine lest I grow as wearisome as my old friend Leresche, of whom Russell dreamed that at the Day of Judgment when he was put into the dock the Archangel Gabriel announced in a trumpet voice: "No other case will be taken to-day!"

THE DREAMERS

By GERALD BEAUMONT



IN the fullness of His wisdom, the Lord added twin boys to the progeny of old man Castro, one of whose ninety-seven cousins was Joe the Barber, ward representative of the Marquis of Queensberry.

The christening of the twins was delayed six months by an epidemic of scarlet fever. Then old lady Castro said they might as well wait until the new church was dedicated.

So, when the twins were almost a year old, fifteen Castros, accompanied by twelve De la Guardias and nineteen members of the Silva family, pomaded their hair, encased themselves in Sunday attire, had their picture taken on the front steps of the Castro residence, and then flocked in a body to the Church of the Holy Ghost.

Father de la Guardia, short and fat and with a mole on his upper lip, prepared himself for the baptismal rites. All went well until the moment when the first infant was suspended face-downward over the baptismal font. Then the family disagreed violently as to whether this was Manuel or Tony, for the twins resembled each other as closely as a pair of tan shoe-buttons. Old Lady Castro whooped, and Aunt Teresa prepared to maintain her opinion with a hatpin. Old man

Castro separated them, and offered a solution worthy of Solomon:

"Well, I tell you, Father, pour the water over them both same time. The one who raise the mos' hell—that is Tony for sure; the other is Manuel!"

This was done; and as soon as the first trickle of water, sacred but none the less cold, struck the napes of the little bared necks, Tony identified himself. He doubled his fists, and the entire neighbourhood was aware that Tony disapproved of the proceedings.

"What I say?" demanded old man Castro. "That li'l Portagee always want to fight. The other one—he's behaved himself. I t'ink that Manuel goin' become a priest."

"Good!" laughed Father de la Guardia. "When he grow up—I see what I can do for him. You tell Joe the Barber keep away. Nineteen time' I take some little altar boy, give him 'Lives of the Saints,' and pray that he become priest; but when that boy is sixteen, Joe take him away and show him how to fight. I tell you, Castro, I get no priest out of this parish, while that barber he's run a fight-club!"

"Well," said the father of the twins, "I let Joe make Tony champion of the world; I give you Manuel; 'at's pretty good split."

Thus was the destiny of the late arrivals predetermined by old man Castro. When they were old enough to attend school, the twins were led to the San Fernando temple of learning, patronized mostly by little girls in gingham frocks and little boys in patched overalls. The latter were all cousins of Joe the Barber, and consequently more interested in body punches and left hooks to the jaw than they were in the multiplication table or the morning Salute to the Flag. Most of them could count up to ten—with the right arm swinging over the prostrate form of their latest antagonist. The others sought earnestly to acquire the same high standard of learning in the hope that some day they might defend themselves in the prize-ring against the leading citizens of South Beach, and hear Joe the Barber crying to them from under the ropes:

"'Atta boy, keed! Bot' hands, you Wop, bot' hands! Now seeng heem the Portagee lullaby! Don't lead; let heem come in to you! He's an ambitious young man—*let heem come in!* Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Pretty, pretty, *ver' pretty!* One more, and we go home!"

Truly, a goal to inspire the dreams of anyone!

"Gracious!" said the charming Miss Prindiville as she inspected the new scholars. "How in the world can *anyone* tell which is which?"

Once more their father was equal to the occasion.

"Well, I tell you," he confided. "The one who know his lessons, that will be Manuel; the one who fight all the time, that will be Tony. Tough li'l Portagee, that boy. Manuel, he goin' become priest."

Sure enough, Manuel became an altar boy, and then a member of the Young Men's Sodality, while Tony joined the Colombo Athletic Club, and was eventually heralded by Joe the Barber as "Kid Tony, the dashing, slashing son-of-a-gun from San Fernando—a barrel of dynamite, and he'll fight the champion for nothing!"

Father de la Guardia strove to keep alive the spiritual morale of the district by *fiestas* and open-air processions and exhortations from the pulpit. On the

other hand, Joe the Barber, founder of the Colombo Athletic Club, was an apostle of modernism. Above his tonsorial parlour he maintained training quarters for his stable of pugilists, and it was his great dream that some day he would disprove the claim of Tommy Hogan, matchmaker of three boxing-clubs, who said that the only title a Portuguese would ever win would be the diving championship of the world.

A shrewd matchmaker was Tommy Hogan. It was he who cultivated for years a pugilistic feud between the youthful citizens of South Beach, San Fernando and the West End, until the inter-district title represented the great goal of civic pride. No bronze plaque yet ornamented the walls of the Colombo Club, but Joe the Barber's dream bloomed afresh when he watched Tony Castro win his first fight.

"'Atta boy, keed," said Joe. "By gosh, I be your manager. How you like to get your picture in the *Police Gazette*, eh?"

Oh, wonder of wonders! Tony's dark eyes sparkled at the very thought; his chest expanded; the world was his! He plunged into the training-pit of pugilism with all the zeal and natural ability of a bull pup attacking a carpet slipper. Even a tyro could see that Tony was born to the trade. Because he so evidently loved the game, the motley followers of the Marquis of Queensberry came in turn to love Tony Castro, and he was hailed by his own people as "the Pride of San Fernando—Tony Castro, the Portuguese Flash."

Old man Castro, now fifty and ten, smoked ten-cent cigars and bought himself a season ticket to the boxing shows; Manuel, the twin, smiled proudly when people, mistaking him for his brother, called out: "H'lo, Tony—how's the Knock-'em-dead Kid?" Joe the Barber put nine pictures of his protégé on the ceiling of his shop so that patrons, while being shaved, might still study the gallant figure of the district hero. But the proudest of all was little Antonina Souza, for *she* was Tony Castro's "Portagee Rose." What child from Ponta Delgada in the Azores can resist a youth who wears lavender silk socks, pomades his hair as they do in the movies, plays a guitar, paraphrases love-songs in her honour, and knocks his opponents out with a glove in which there is a rose she has given him?

Antonina was in paradise, especially when Tony, seated on the Souza family sofa, leaned his head against the wall, and sang while he strummed a guitar:

She's my sweet Portagee Rose,
The fairest flower that grows.
And some day for her sake
The title I'll take—
And I'll marry my Portagee Rose!

It was clearly understood between them that when Tony won the title they would be married by Father de la Guardia.

But in the midst of all the happiness Fate stacked the cards one night in old Powell's Pavilion, and the Portuguese Flash emerged a broken-hearted boy.

Strange friendships are formed on the battlefields of Fisticiana. Johnny McGovern and Tony Castro were mutual admirers and the best of comrades-at-arms. Johnny was red-haired and the champion of the West End. Their respective managers ordained that they should meet twice, and they battled with such cheerful ferocity that the public demanded a third encounter.

So the third contest was arranged, and the house was sold out several days before the scheduled date. Now, it happened that on every other occasion on which they fought, little Antonina, watching the clock, had gone upstairs at the hour of ten and said her rosary for twenty minutes in order that her sweetheart might enjoy every advantage. But this night Antonina, pouting resentfully, left her beads hanging on the bedpost. That was because Tony, several eyenings before, had imbibed too freely and had been arrested for throwing billiard-balls at the lights in Cesare's Place. That meant breaking his date at Armandare's Hard-Times Dance, where she was certain they would have won the prize waltz. Naturally there had been a lovers' quarrel. Tony called for no rose; Antonina said no prayer. This was, of course, a sad mistake.

Old-timers still talk of that fight between the two friends, Johnny McGovern and the Pride of San Fernando, for it is marked in the record-books with a star and a footnote.

Tony Castro, fighting with the skill and strength of a born champion, sensed when the bell called them together for the fourth round that victory was his. McGovern was weakening.

"Better you lie down, keed," Tony panted. "You give me tough fight, Johnny, but you're through now."

There was no yellow streak in Johnny McGovern. The red-haired youth from the West End pulled himself together and grinned.

"Come get me, you Wop!" he taunted, and crashed a reddened glove flush to the other's unprotected jaw. Most boys would have dropped. Tony's knees sagged; he caught at the ropes, braced himself, and as his chum tore in, ducked nimbly to one side.

The top rope, loosened by a night of repeated strain, gave under the impact of Johnny McGovern's rush, and he pitched out of the ring, crashing down headfirst upon the wooden steps that connected platform to the floor. Still dizzy from his own exertions, Tony Castro reeled to a ring post, and clung there looking down at his chum. Johnny's handlers swooped upon their man, and boosted him up again just as the bell rang, signalling the end of the contest. The crowd waited for the decision.

The referee raised Tony's right glove, and the galleries thundered applause upon their idol. The Pride of San Fernando acknowledged the tribute with a wave of one hand, and then hurried to the corner of the vanquished, where he flung perspiring bronze arms around the inert figure.

"At's all right, Johnny," he panted. "You give me a nice fight. Nex' time maybe I don't be so lucky!"

Joe the Barber threw a bathrobe over the victor's shoulders and led his protégé to the dressing-room. Half the crowd left the pavilion; the other half loitered behind to cheer the loser when he should arise.

Tony was stripping the tape from his knuckles, and listening to Joe the Barber's enthusiastic praise, when he heard someone say that Johnny McGovern was still unconscious. He wrenched himself free of his attendants and rushed back to hoist himself through the ropes and shoulder his way into the cluster of men standing under the glare of the arc lights. He was in time to hear a physician, rising from the side of the prostrate figure of Johnny McGovern, say to a police sergeant:

"The boy's dead."

"No-no-no!" screamed Tony Castro.

Physician and officer were hurled violently to either side by a youth who dropped to the white canvas and took Johnny McGovern in his arms as a mother might cuddle her child.

"Johnny! Johnny!" he babbled. "You're not dead! I tell you, you're not dead! Open your eyes, keed! You're all right now! You feelin' much better—no? See, I rub your hands, Johnny! Come on, Johnny; don't fool Tony no more! Come on, keed; I take you home—"

The police sergeant laid a kindly hand on the boy's shoulder.

"It's no use, son. Put him down, and get dressed. You'll have to come to the station."

But it took five strong men to pry the lifeless form of Johnny McGovern from the arms of his chum, who had never known tragedy and who refused now to recognize it. He could not believe that Johnny was dead, not even when Joe the Barber, with tears in his eyes, tried to convince him of the fact.

But gradually the truth was forced home with the hideous exaggeration of a nightmare. It mattered not that the newspapers and a coroner's jury absolved the Portuguese Flash from responsibility—nor that Johnny's father, who had once been a boxer himself, tried in his awkward way to comfort the mourning boy: the experience wrought a change in the dreams of Tony Castro. Jail—mortuary—inquest—funeral—and the spectacle of Johnny's mother weeping at a fresh-turned grave: these were the things that fastened themselves morbidly upon the boy's sensitive mind.

Not even Antonina, approaching wide-eyed, could comfort him.

"But, Tony dear," she pleaded, "accidents like that happen in baseball and football. It was not your fault. Didn't you listen to what was said at the inquest? Next time you will carry the rose in your glove, and I will say the rosary. Tony, don't look like that; you frighten me!"

"I don't fight no more," he mumbled. "I never be champion of the world; I never be able to buy for you all the things that I promise. See, 'Nina—he lay like this in my arms, the boy I love nex' to Manuel, and—they take him away from me!"

The thing became an obsession that

wrung his soul by day, and pattered upon him at night like a vampire. He shrank from his friends, locked himself in his room, and tried to blot out from his memory even virgin-eyed, flower-faced Antonina, for his little "Portagee Rose" had been inseparably linked with his dream of the lightweight championship.

It was Manuel, hitherto the submerged personality of the two, who now laid aside his own dreams in an effort to save his brother. No longer did he walk with Father de la Guardia under the grape-arbour and feed crackers to Nu-Nu, the parrot. The Young Men's Sodality missed a shining example; the pastor of the Church of the Holy Ghost waited in vain for a beloved protégé to resume his study of scholastic philosophy.

Manuel thumbed the guitar when Tony would not touch it; Manuel sang when Tony was silent; Manuel learned to box in order that he might try to persuade Tony to keep in trim. Manuel smoked, and drank and was convivial; Manuel called on Antonina and discussed with Tony's little "Portagee Rose" how the Pride of San Fernando might be restored to normality.

It was not long before Manuel received much of the attention and popularity that had once been Tony's and found it not unpleasant. It is ever thus when an understudy becomes suddenly dazzled by the spotlight of stardom. Manuel's head was turned. Tony shrank deeper into his shell, and gradually took to himself the discarded characteristics of his brother. They were both dreamers, with Latin minds that responded to suggestion; and now it was as though the Great Magician for reasons of His own had spread His hands over the twins, and *presto*—their personalities and ambitions were exchanged.

"Son-of-a-gun!" said old man Castro. "I guess I get those boys mix' up after all. Well, what I care? When they die, one of them go up; the other go down—tha's all! Me and my wife goin' split same way when time comes."

The days passed, and Father de la Guardia, walking one afternoon in the parochial garden, looked up from his breviary to greet one of old Castro's boys.

"Ah, Manuel, how is it with you?"

"This is not Manuel, Father—this is Tony."

"So? Well, Tony, my son?"

"I think I like to become priest, Father."

Father de la Guardia's mouth opened, and remained so. 'One finger slowly caressed the mole on his upper lip. He stared at the Portuguese Flash, and noted that the boy was clad in the customary conservative clothes of Manuel.

"H'm," he said finally, and laid a kind hand on Tony's shoulder. "So you want to become priest, eh? Why you think so, Tony?"

"Manuel been talkin' to me, Father. He give me his copy of 'Lives of the Saints' to read. I been pretty tough kid, Father—but St. Augustine, he was tough kid too."

"I thought you going to marry Antonina, Tony."

Tony hung his head. "I want to become priest," he reiterated dully.

Father de la Guardia's eyes searched the garden and came to rest upon the shrine of St. Joseph. But he found no inspiration there. It was many minutes before he spoke. Then he sighed and squared his shoulders.

"My son," he deliberated, "it is not for me to say. Sometimes I am very wise; other times I am *not* so wise. But I tell you this much, Tony; if you become priest, it is because God want it that way, not you, nor I, nor Manuel. Come, let us feed Nu-Nu."

That was the beginning of a strong bond of sympathy between old Father de la Guardia and the one-time Pride of San Fernando—a bond that strengthened as the days went on and the experienced man of God gently probed the youthful mind.

Despite his good-natured feud with Joe the Barber, the pastor of the Church of the Holy Ghost had seen many a boy acquire self-control, discipline and a sound body under the tutelage of the president of the Colombo Athletic Club. He appreciated that this was America—a land whose patron saints knocked home runs, kicked goals from the fifty-yard line, draped the national emblem about their waists and humiliated the foreigner with a left hook to the solar plexus. These things hardened the morale and kindled the ambitions of the younger generation. Father de la Guardia was a dreamer too. He knew that the prestige of his people in that country suffered from the fact that they had not yet contributed an athletic idol. There was pathos in the

way Joe the Barber and little Antonina had worshipped the Portuguese Flash. The man of God was confronted with a very human problem in the white face and wistful eyes of Johnny McGovern's chum. One afternoon he squared his shoulders, and said abruptly:

"Tony, I think I send you to a novitiate up in the mountains where it do you a lot of good. Prayer is a good thing, Tony—but sometimes milk and eggs, they do just as much good as holy water. You stay up there one year. Maybe when you find how long it takes to become a priest, you change your mind. If not, then I see what I can do for you some more. You go to-morrow, my son."

So, to the novitiate of San Miguel in the Santa Cruz Mountains, went the one-time terror of the lightweights, to make his peace with the Great Referee.

He arrived in a region as health-giving as the Riviera, as picturesque as Southern France, as pulse-awakening as the high Sierras. The grey walls of the novitiate, flanked by hillside vineyards, looked down upon a valley where in spring a pink-and-white foam of blossoms covered forty miles of fruit-trees. Behind the novitiate rose the giant redwoods, the oldest living things on earth.

Here, Tony Castro, once "Hell-raising Tony," strolled through quiet gardens reading Manuel's copy of the "Lives of the Saints"—while Manuel, in the clutch of Tony's dream, set out to win the Queensberry kinship and lay it at the feet of the "Portagee Rose."

Shrewd ringside experts in the East who watched Kid Castro in action, as time passed, and who knew the methods of Jake Devlin, the boy's manager, smiled cynically whenever Manuel was suggested as championship timber. But in the West, and particularly in the great metropolis that engulfed San Fernando, the boy's career was watched with growing pride. He might not be taken seriously by the wise old veterans of the game, but there was scarcely a Portuguese in the country who did not hear with sympathetic interest, of Manuel's ambition.

The lightweight title was in the hands of a champion regarded by many as unbeatable. Matty Larsen, the "Minnesota Thunderbolt," was a freak of the ring—heavy of torso, lithe of leg, stoic to punishment, an educated fighting savage. One after another his opponents dropped

before the onslaught of the Thunderbolt, until no challenger worthy of the name was left. There remained nothing for the lightweight monarch but the music-hall circuits and the prospect of a tour of Europe.

One year after Tony Castro had turned his back upon the world, two men met in the back room of a roadside tavern outside of Chicago, and discussed the possibilities of Kid Castro. One was Chicago Jimmy Sullivan, manager of the champion; the other was Jake Devlin, who boasted that he owned Kid Castro—body and soul. It was the third time they had met in secret conference. Sullivan was weakening.

"Let me sum it up for you again," pleaded Devlin. "You need a fight to keep Matty from going stale; he's sick of the stage, ain't he?"

Sullivan nodded emphatically. "He sure is!"

"All right," said Devlin. "Now, I've gone just as far with my boy as I can. I've matched him with every worn-out bum and cream-puff boxer in the country, and he's got by them simply because I fed him whisky between rounds, and threatened to crown him with a water-bucket when he wanted to quit. He's not a fighter; he's a Portagee dreamer. He won't last three minutes with Larsen, and—by God—I don't want him to!"

Sullivan frowned, and tapped nervous fingers upon the table.

"How do I know you're not crossing me?" he demanded. "How do I know you haven't been making this kid pull his punches for a year just so the champion would take him on? If, as you say, this kid don't like the game, how does he happen to be in it? And how come, if he has no heart, is he willing to let you match him against a man that'll murder him? You'll have to put your cards on the table, if you expect

to do business with me, brother. I'm no boob!"

So Jake Devlin, rat-faced and diamond-spattered, sketched as best he knew it, the story of the one-time Portuguese Flash. He told of the death of Johnny McGovern, the retirement of Tony Castro, and the subsequent rise of Manuel under the tutelage of Joe the Barber.

"There's a Portagee skirt mixed up in it, too," he concluded. "She was stuck on Tony, but when he quit to become a priest, that let her out. So she promises my boy to marry him if he becomes the village hero! Regular motion-picture stuff—see? The best of it is, that there's never been a Portagee idol, and all the soft-



"I think I like become priest, Father." Father de la Guardia's mouth opened and remained so

eyed bugs in the country will be pulling for him. Stage the scrap in his own native State, and there'll be fifty thousand people fighting for admission."

Sullivan pondered this a minute.

"You haven't told me yet," he reminded, "how you're going to kid this lad into stepping into a ring just to be shown up before his own people. He ain't fool enough to think he's got a chance, is he?"

"Leave that part of it to me," said Devlin. "I've already bullied him into believing that Matty's wife don't want him to fight any more, and that the champion is willing to sell the title for fifty thousand bucks. Kid Castro will go into training believing that Matty has agreed to take a dive in the interests of Portugal. When he learns the truth, it will be too late to back out, and he'll be licked before he goes into the ring. I'll lay fifty thousand dollars through an agent that Kid Castro don't last six rounds."

Sullivan's lip curled, and he looked his contempt.

"Oh, well," grunted Devlin, "the idea didn't originate with me. It was pulled once before in a championship contest, and you know it. If you think I'm crossing you, I'll let you bet my money on your boy. How's that?"

The manager of the Minnesota Thunderbolt spat on the floor in supreme disgust.

"Don't tell me any more of your plans," he instructed. "I've heard too much, now. Here's my answer: Matty needs a fight to keep himself on edge. You get a promoter to guarantee me fifty thousand dollars, win, lose or draw—and I'll let Matty take on any lad in the country that can make a hundred and thirty-five pounds ringside. If you want to tell young Castro, or any other kid, that Matty is going to lay down, that's your own rotten business. The Thunderbolt will be trying for a knock-out from the tap of the first gong."

Jake Devlin arose, dusted himself with a silk handkerchief, and fingered lovingly the yellow diamond in his tie.

"I couldn't ask for nothin' better," said he. "The fight's on!"

There was a grand reunion six months later at the Castro residence in San Fernando, for on the following day—in a great open-air arena constructed by Pro-

motor Tommy Hogan—Kid Castro was to meet the Minnesota Thunderbolt for the lightweight championship of the world. Publicity, as usual, had worked its charm; the public, scornful and suspicious at first, had finally fallen for the match. Scattered over the country, loyal American citizens, who looked fondly upon the little overseas republic as the land of their ancestry, prayed that Destiny would be kind to old man Castro's boy. San Fernando decorated its streets and proclaimed a public holiday. Its dream was coming true.

To the Castro residence flocked the ninety-seven cousins—the De la Guardias, the Silvas, the Costellos and the Garcias—radiant and perfumed. Manuel came over from his training-camp; Antonina, in a new pink frock, joined the gathering; so did Joe the Barber and Father de la Guardia; and—lo and behold—here came Tony from the novitiate to greet his brother, and wish him well.

Old Man Castro, strangling in a stiff white collar, and hobbled by new boots, stood in the midst of the assemblage that lined up on the front steps for the inevitable picture.

"Boss of the whole damn' works," said the patriarch, "—tha's me! Make only one mistake in my life, but, son-of-a-gun!—she's bad one! I pick Manuel to be priest—that's what you call boner, eh?"

Antonina alone did not smile. She stood silently by Tony Castro, looking up at him out of the corner of one eye, and toying with the red rose that she always wore at her belt.

Later the brothers had a chance to talk to each other in private. To each boy it was like looking into a mirror. The only difference between them now was that Manuel was strangely depressed and silent, Tony happy and voluble.

The year at the novitiate had helped Tony Castro. Quite apparently he had made his peace with the soul of Johnny McGovern. He was clear-eyed and vigorous, with a suggestion of steel muscles under the sombre clothes.

"What you been doin', Tony?" said his twin. "You look pretty good."

Tony explained smilingly:

"Just keepin' in shape. I don't want to be sick priest, so I get permission to run a few miles every morning, and then I punch the bag a little in the afternoon.

Right. And you, Manuel, you goin' whip this boy to-morrow, eh?"

Manuel studied the floor. "Yes, I win."

"And then you—marry Antonina?"

Manuel nodded.

Tony looked away, and then squared his shoulders. "Good!" he said quietly. "I pray for you both!"

It suited Jake Devlin's purpose to break the news to Kid Castro at the latter's training-quarters. Jake reasoned that the shock would paralyse the boy's faculties, rob him of any rest or sleep, and leave him alone through the long night at the mercy of his shattered nerves. So far, he reasoned correctly; but he made the mistake of leaving his victim at eleven o'clock that night in a room where the window was but a short drop to the ground.

A few minutes before midnight—some-one stumbled over the steps of the parochial residence that adjoins the Church of the Holy Ghost. The bell trilled jerkily again and again. Father de la Guardia was out on a sick call. It was Tony Castro who opened the door upon the white-faced, shaking figure of his brother. Manuel reeled across the threshold, clutching at his twin for support.

"They've crossed me!" he gasped. "Tony, they've crossed me! I'm not goin' to be champion! Everybody's goin' to see me lose! I ain't got a chance! Tony, I can't fight! I tell you, I can't fight!"

Tony Castro threw an arm around his brother's shoulders, drew him into the little parlour, closed and locked the door.

"Sit down, Manuel," he directed quietly. "Sit down, and tell me everything."

It was a strange scene: old man Castro's sons, identical in appearance, facing each other at midnight in Father de la Guardia's home, one of them sobbing out his broken dreams to the other, who stood erect by the fireplace, arms folded, listening silently.

The strange consanguinity that exists between twins enabled Tony to sense all that was passing in his brother's mind as clearly as though it were he himself who was now pinned to the torture-rack. Tony had once gone blithely along the Queensberry trail, dreaming of the title and his "Portagee Rose," and had seen all the sunshine suddenly blotted from

the world. Tony had once dreamed of a day when the streets of San Fernando would be decorated in his honour, when Portuguese-Americans all over the country would be watching the bulletin-boards, when little Antonina would send him into the ring with a kiss upon his lips and a red rose in his glove. He had seen this dream dissolve into a nightmare. Now it was Manuel whose cup of joy was being dashed from his lips; it was Manuel who would be sacrificed on the morrow.

Upon the shoulders of this dazed and conscience-stricken boy, who carried the fond aspirations—and in some instances the financial savings—of his people, rested a greater responsibility than his brother had ever known. Tony bit his quivering lips; tiny beads of perspiration made their appearance on his forehead. It was the supreme crisis in the lives of both. Manuel was helpless.

The one-time Pride of San Fernando looked down at his brother.

"Manuel," he said thickly, "Manuel—you remember what you told me to do when I was in trouble? You told me to look for guidance, no? Now I tell you the same thing, and I think—I think—He goin' to help you. Come on, Manuel—I pray too!"

Father de la Guardia returned a little later. He walked along the corridor towards his room, and paused halfway, doubting the evidence of his eyes. For there in front of the little statue of St. Joseph that occupied a niche in the wall, he beheld what appeared to be *two* Tony Castros, kneeling side by side in mute supplication.

Father de la Guardia's mouth opened and remained so; a meditative forefinger stroked the mole on his upper lip while he waited patiently but in vain for the optical illusion to dissolve. Finally he walked slowly towards the apparition.

At nine o'clock the next morning Promoter Tommy Hogan, Chicago Jimmy Sullivan and Jake Devlin were peremptorily summoned to the office of District Attorney de Soto, who was one of Joe the Barber's ninety-seven cousins.

De Soto was a young man. His admirers insisted he would some day be Governor of the State. He motioned the three men into chairs, and went straight to the point.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I regret to in-

form you that Kid Castro is in a state of nervous collapse. The fight is off, and one of you is under arrest."

"Good God!" exclaimed Tommy Hogan.

Jake Devlin's face became the colour of chalk. Sullivan leaped to his feet.

"Not me!" he shouted. "You haven't got anything on me! If there's been any framing, it was by that dirty crook over there!" He shook his fist at Devlin. "Didn't I tell you the champion would be trying from the first bell? Didn't I offer to fight any boy in the country who could make one hundred and thirty-five pounds? Who picked Matty's opponent? You did! Who said Matty was going to lay down? You! Who made Kid Castro collapse, and told me just how you were going to do it? You!"

Devlin flinched under the verbal lash.

Sullivan wheeled on Tommy Hogan:

"I've been guaranteed fifty thousand dollars, and I'm going to collect it! Put a substitute into the ring! Throw Young Sharkey in there, or Battling Davis—they're both in town. What the hell's the difference?"

"Gentlemen," reminded the District Attorney, "I told you the contest was off. Tickets will be returned to the purchasers. There were elements in this match—national aspirations—that none of you who has not the blood of Portugal in his veins could quite appreciate. Do you think San Fernando would have decorated its streets for Young Sharkey or Battling Davis? Do you think Portuguese-Americans all over the country would be watching bulletin boards to-day if a motherland dream was not involved?"

Tommy Hogan groaned.

"True enough," he admitted, "but good Lord, Eddie, I'm innocent of any wrong, and the cancellation of this match will bankrupt me. What about all the people who've come hundreds of miles to see this scrap? What are you going to tell the newspapers? Are you going to let 'em know what made Kid Castro collapse? If you do that, Eddie, you'll not alone hurt the boxing game, but you'll break the heart of old man Castro, and bring humiliation on every Portagee in the country."

De Soto arose and walked to the window. He stood there, looking out into the decorated street, and thinking of his interview with Joe the Barber only an

hour earlier. It was Joe who had hurried to the De Soto home with the news that he had learned over the telephone from Father de la Guardia. It was Joe who had suggested a possible solution; it was Joe who had rushed away, promising to return. The District Attorney frowned, and drummed thoughtfully on the window-pane.

There was a knock on the door, and a deputy entered. He whispered to his superior. The latter hesitated.

"All right," he said finally. "Tell them to come in."

Joe the Barber appeared. Behind him came one of old man Castro's boys. The president of the Colombo Club accomplished introductions with an excited wave of one hand.

"Boys, thees is Manuel's brother, who will act as substitute. Meet the Pride of San Fernando, Tony Castro, the nex' lightweight champion of the world!"

There was an interval of dumb astonishment, then Babel, followed by explanations and heated arguments that lasted half an hour.

The champion's manager surveyed the new challenger curiously.

"So you're the kid that was going to become a priest, eh?"

"Yes," said Tony, "I was going to become a priest."

Sullivan grinned. The sad expression on the boy's face convinced him that this substitution of brothers was not a frame-up.

"I'm satisfied," he announced. "The referee can call all bets off, and that will block Jake's game. But we'd better sign the articles over again, and make the proper announcement from the ringside. That all right, Mr. District Attorney?"

De Soto hesitated, his eyes on the averted face of old man Castro's boy.

"You realize what you're doing, lad?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tony. "Manuel blow up—I take his place!"

"All right," decided the District Attorney. "If the club physicians pronounce this boy in the proper physical condition, and he's willing to substitute for his brother, I see no reason for any interference on the part of the authorities."

A few minutes later a pale-faced youth wrote his name at the bottom of a Queensberry contract; and Tony Castro, the Portuguese Flash, was back once

more in the world of tragedy, strife and love!

Three o'clock in the afternoon saw a copper sun peering down on an unfolding drama strangely reminiscent of the days when naked gladiators raised their swords to the howling multitude in the Roman amphitheatre. Fifty thousand people, men and women, packed in a great wooden bowl in the centre of which was a roped platform, twenty feet square, awaiting champion and challenger. The preliminaries passed—four- and six-round pugilistic appetizers intended to warm the blood, stimulate the imagination, and prepare the mind for the main event. Hustlers cried their wares and motion-picture cameras clicked from temporary towers. Aeroplanes droned overhead, one of them painted in the Portuguese colours. Down at the ringside newspaper men were dictating to telegraphers the story of the nervous breakdown of Kid Castro, and the eleventh-hour substitution of his brother. A few hundred spectators on the main floor heard the news, and spread it among their friends, but the majority in the great assemblage did not comprehend the message barked repeatedly from mechanical announcers. Babbling confusion, hoarse tumult, drowned out everything. The multitude trusted to its eyes alone.

A squad of police bloomed suddenly at one of the entrances, and began to clear a path down a congested aisle. Behind them pressed a bareheaded youth in a purple dressing-gown, surrounded by his handlers. A cheer started along the aisle, rippled over the arena, and rose steadily in volume. Kid Castro was coming into the ring.

A second tornado followed swiftly on the heels of the first as the Minnesota Thunderbolt put in his appearance from the opposite side and began to work his way through the crowd. They met in the centre of the ring and shook hands. Photographers swarmed, through the ropes, levelled their cameras, and hustled out again. The principals were introduced, and again the tumult broke out.

Tony Castro stared out into the sea of faces, and waved his gloved hands in acknowledgment of the tribute. Those at the ringside could see that his legs were trembling. A veteran newspaper man turned to his associate.

"Stage-fright!" he whispered. "I'd like to see the boy get by, but the psychology of the thing is against him. Damn' shame to send a kid up to the slaughter-block in his native town. That's old Man Castro over there in the third box, and the little girl next to him—the one with the pink dress and the rose—is the kid's Jane. Sour, ain't it?"

But it was not stage-fright that assailed Tony Castro. The spectacle was overpowering enough, but all through his boyhood just such a moment had been his dream. Natural nervousness was a thing he could have conquered with the exchange of the first blows. He was gripped by something else. He was neither the "Pride of San Fernando," nor yet the boy who had turned his face towards the priesthood. He was a sacrificial child of circumstances, who had yielded to the pleadings of Joe the Barber and to the white face of Manuel. A thousand doubts assailed him. The memory of a night in Powell's Pavilion sapped his strength. He felt cold and weak and helpless. The thought came to him that he—Tony Castro—was about to fail miserably, about to humiliate everyone, about to be publicly disgraced in the very scene his boyish imagination had conjured as the epic theatre of his life's drama.

The referee waved all outsiders from the ring. Tony was numbly aware that Joe the Barber had taken from his shoulders the purple dressing-gown, and was patting him on the back—assuring him that everything was all right. The bell clanged dully.

Who in all that great assemblage will ever forget those early rounds of the battle between Tony Castro and Matty Larsen for the lightweight championship of the world? Surely not Joe the Barber, not little Antonina, nor old man Castro—not even the hardened newspaper men dictating jerkily to their telegraphers their detailed descriptions.

For the Minnesota Thunderbolt lived up to advance notices. Merciless as a machine, tough as leather, fighting with the confidence of a champion, Matty Larsen made a human chopping-block of old man Castro's boy.

The Pride of San Fernando did his best, but he was a youth whose magnificent muscles were curbed, whose fighting instinct was blanketed, whose superb body

was guided only by a dazed intelligence. Only the will to keep his feet sustained him. Bleeding and groggy, he reeled around the ring, the Thunderbolt following, and landing almost at will. Occasionally old man Castro's boy stood his ground, rallying desperately, but his blows lacked both driving power and direction. He was being outfought, outclassed, outgeneraled. Again and again it seemed that he must go down under the battering ram that shook his frame.

The ropes were searing his back, and his legs were bending under him. Then a bell clanged dimly in the din, and Joe the Barber caught him as he staggered to his corner.

Not for this had San Fernando decorated its streets; not for such a spectacle had the Colombo Club made its preparations; nor for this were thousands of dark-eyed men watching bulletin-boards all over the country. But no one in the great arena who was of Portuguese blood blamed the challenger.

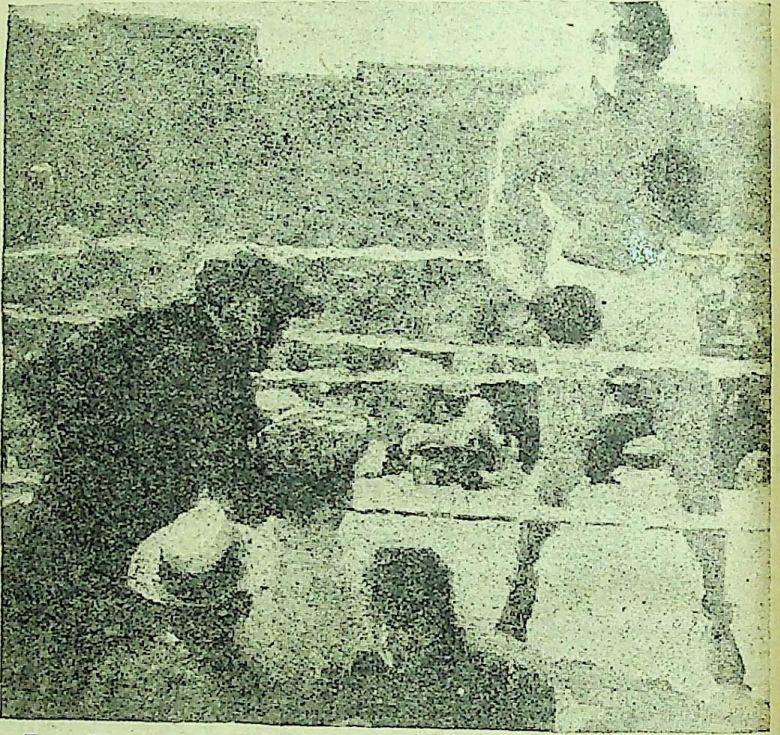
Matty Larsen was all that had been said of him. He was unbeatable. This was the answer. Gloom settled over the stadium.

Each round was a repetition of the preceding; the fifth brought no surcease to the scourging, nor yet the sixth. The seventh round saw old man Castro's boy still on his feet, still doggedly surviving punishment such as none had ever seen received before. A red-faced individual, three rows from the ringside, who had missed the early announcement, jumped to his feet. He had seen Kid Castro in action once, and he didn't believe in

miracles. He cupped his hands to his mouth and rose to a point of information.

"What's holding that boy up?" he bellowed. "Who is he? If that's Kid Castro, why the hell don't he fall?"

The only answer was a sulphuric request from a hundred people to sit down. The red-faced man, rumbling like a volcano, was suppressed by a sergeant of police. But over the bleachers there spread the first flush of returning pride. Seven rounds against Matty Larsen!



Tony Castro's legs crumbled and he sank slowly to his knees. The referee sprang forward and began to count . . .

The jubilant cries of the champion's adherents: "There he goes! You got him, Matty! There he goes!" were answered now by the defiant roar of San Fernandans:

"Fight him, Kid! You no gone yet, boy! Stay with him, Kid! Come on, you Portagee!"

At the end of the tenth round Joe the Barber, sniffing like a child, knew the truth. Tony Castro could not stand it much longer.

The president of the Colombo Club knelt by the lad's side, one hand loosening at the belt to permit the abdominal

muscles free play, the other washing Tony's bruised features with a sponge.

"Deep breath, Tony," he urged. "Deep breath! How you feelin'?"

Old man Castro's boy shut his lips, expanded his lungs, and exhaled wearily. He peered through swollen eyes at the opposite corner.

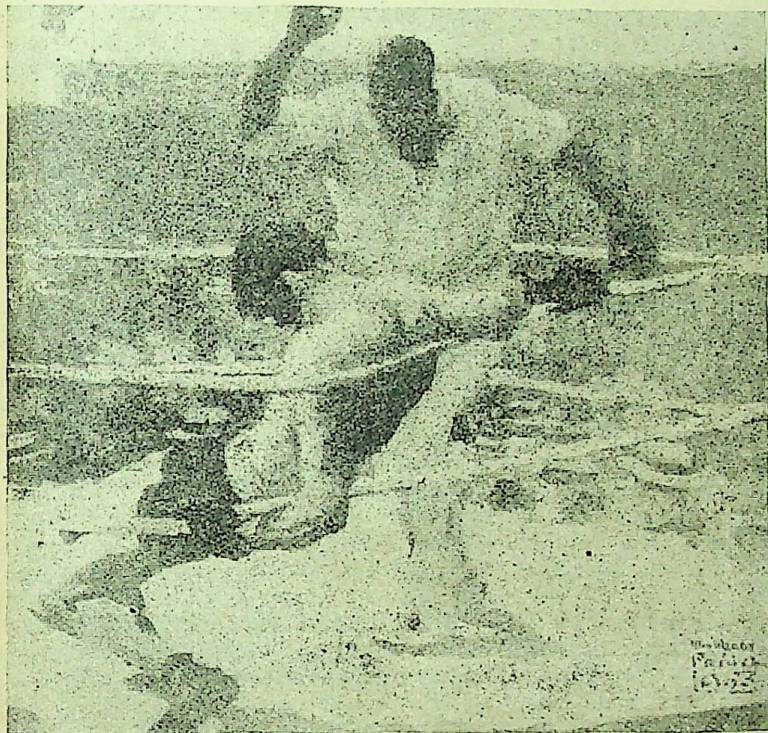
"All right," he answered dully. "Pretty soon I get started; pretty soon I get goin'."

He had said that at the end of every

smash that broke through the challenger's guard and landed just under the heart. An uppercut followed. Tony Castro's legs crumpled, and he sank slowly to his knees. The referee sprang forward and began to count. . . .

In the nine seconds that were given him, old man Castro's boy had a dream. There on his knees under the copper sun, with fifty thousand people watching his quivering body, he dreamed that he was once again the light-hearted lad who

fought for the glory of the neighbourhood and the love of a girl, fought with a smile on his lips and a rose in his glove, knowing all the while that Antonina was praying for his success. The other things had never happened. It was Manuel who had gone away to the quiet novitiate in the mountains; it was Manuel who had read "The Lives of the Saints." He was Tony Castro, the Portuguese Flash, the Pride of San Fernando, and Joe the Barber had promised to put his picture in the



Old Man Castro's boy clutched the ropes and dragged himself to his feet. Blind instinct told him what to do

round and had meant it; but the fire of inspiration was missing. He was not the boy who had once brought ten thousand people shrieking to their feet. He was only sacrificing himself for Manuel.

The bell rang for the eleventh round, and he stumbled up mechanically. Joe the Barber sluiced the bronze back with cold water, and Tony went forward.

Matty Larsen, stung by the taunts from the bleachers, rushed across the ring, swinging both hands. He hooked a left and right to the body, repeated, shoved his opponent against the ropes, fainted—and then unloosed a terrific

Police Gazette. He was the boy who played the guitar and sang to Antonina:

She's my sweet Portagee Rose
The fairest flower that grows.
And some day for her sake
The title I'll take
And I'll marry my Portagee Rose!

Stupor-filled eyes stared at a sea of figures at the ringside. He did not see the newspaper men bending over their telegraphers, nor the triumphant faces of those who were cheering the champion; nor did he recognize the pathetic figure of old man Castro, his father, standing

hat in hand, like the chief mourner at a funeral. The only thing upon which his eyes mechanically focused was the figure of a girl in a pink dress with a rose at her belt, her face buried in small hands around the fingers of which a rosary was twined. His subconscious mind reacted to the picture.

Old man Castro's boy clutched the ropes and dragged himself to his feet. Blind instinct told him what to do. He wrapped bronze arms around jaw and wind, covering up like a turtle, and backed around under the fistic deluge, until he could brace himself in a corner. Then he clinched, and hung on desperately. Matty Larsen tore loose, and set himself for the finishing blow; but always the figure before him reeled out of harm's way, ducked and clinched. The bell brought temporary surcease, and Tony Castro, grinning through cracked lips, actually danced to his corner.

Then all San Fernando rose up, and proclaimed that old man Castro's boy was theirs. The heavens rang under their tribute to his gameness, and even the champion's adherents joined.

Joe the Barber, working frantically over the panting body of the boy he loved, sensed that something had happened. He threw Tony's head back, and looked into the boy's eyes. They were aflame with a queer, fixed light. He shook the youngster roughly and screamed through the din:

"You feelin' all right, Kid?"

The answer came in expressionless cadence:

"Let heem come in; he's ambitious young man—let heem come in, and I marry my Portagee Rose!"

Tony Castro left his corner with a leap that took him half-way across the ring. In ten seconds the Minnesota Thunderbolt knew that a miracle had happened, and that he was up against the fight of his life. It was no spiritless, awkward youth who faced him now, but a born fighter, guided by a dominant instinct, swayed by a courage as great as his own, gripped in the blind lust of battle and experiencing what is known as "second wind."

They charged, clinched and broke away. Matty Larsen gathered himself and leaped. He was stabbed in mid-air by a left hook. He danced off, circled and charged again. This time it was a right cross that stopped him. It sounded like

the rap of an axe upon a barrel-head. The Thunderbolt quivered.

Old man Castro's boy, still dreaming of his Portagee Rose, felt the champion sagging in his arms. Bleeding lips curved in the familiar smile that bared the whitest of teeth. He stepped back, fainted with the easy grace of the leopard, and suddenly a red glove shot out. Full and true it crashed against its mark. The Thunderbolt reared back, pawing the air futilely. He knew that he was done for, but what his fogged mind could not understand was why his opponent should have caught him, and be lowering his tired form so gently to the canvas floor.

The white-bloused referee swung his arm in the knockout litany; the whirling arena became a lidless Bedlam; newspaper men shouted vivid words into the ears of telegraph operators, who in turn flashed them to every part of America. Joe the Barber, scrambling through the ropes, caught up in his arms the still dreaming Pride of San Fernando, Tony Castro, the new lightweight champion of the world!

Some weeks afterward, when Tony's features had resumed their normal appearance, he and Antonina were married by Father de la Guardia in the Church of the Holy Ghost. The Castros, the Silvas, the Costellos were all there; so were Joe the Barber and his ninety-seven cousins. In fact, most of San Fernando was on hand, and everyone will tell you there never was such a magnificent ceremony before or since.

After the happy bride and groom had rolled away in a taxi, and the church was empty of guests, old man Castro turned to the grey-headed pastor of the Church of the Holy Ghost.

"Well, what I say that time you pour the holy water over them, eh? Champion prophet of the whole damn' world—that's me!"

Father de la Guardia stroked the mole on his upper lip and smiled.

"Castro," he questioned, "what you think made each boy try to sacrifice himself for the other? If it was not for that, you be very bad prophet. Sometime I read you a lesson from 'The Lives of the Saints,' but you will now excuse me, please. Manuel is waiting in the garden, and we are going to feed Nu-Nu."

ROBIN HOOD

By WARWICK DEEPING

THE Ford car pulled up on the brow of the moor, and its occupant, a tall man in tweeds, got out and walked round the car, looking at the tyres. The Ford was a four-seater, and in the back seat, and disposed with an air of casual negligence, were two brown suit-cases, a heavy overcoat, a rug, and a white canvas bag full of golf clubs. The *raison d'être* of the car was obvious. The man was on a holiday, moving from place to place, and amusing himself by experiencing the adventures of new and strange golf courses.

He had pulled up to look at the tyres and the view, and perhaps there was no more splendid and lonely sweep of country than the Medlock Moors at sunset. Nothing moved on those great barren hills save a few sheep and the shadows of the clouds. They were covered with a rustiness that was heather and coarse grass.

The man climbed the bank and stood there against the sunset. He was slim and well built, and in age about five-and-thirty. He was ordinary, and yet not quite ordinary, for as he stood there on that high, sun-steeped and solitary hill there was something bird-like about him, a suggestion of hovering, of a falcon poised before a swoop. His face was aquiline in its sharpness and in its curves. There was something in him of fierceness and of accusation. Or he might have been standing upon the parapet of some trench and looking out over a battlefield.

A valley lay below, a wooded valley, and the level sunlight lay along the domes of its trees. It touched more than the trees, the greyiness of some old building, a turret, a row of battlements, a clock tower, gables. Medlock Abbey lay down yonder, and the man's eyes were fixed on it.

He glanced at his wrist-watch.

"Seven o'clock."

He pulled out a pipe and a tobacco pouch and turned towards the car. It was an inconspicuous, an anonymous car.

Anyone might have passed it and forgotten it a moment later, and no one would have troubled to glance at its number plate. The man smiled. He had a pleasant smile, and it effaced his look of intent and meditative fierceness.

"Like thousands of others," he thought; "that's the best sort of camouflage."

He was in the act of lighting his pipe when someone hailed him.

"Excuse me, will you please help?"

He turned rather sharply, with a shade of annoyance, but with no suggestion of being startled. He saw a girl. She had come up over the moor, and it was obvious to him that she had been running. She was out of breath. She was small and slight and curiously appealing, with red hair that had almost a touch of crimson in it, and two very dark eyes in a pale face.

"It's my dog," she said. "He has fallen down an old disused shaft. Can you help?"

"Of course."

He went with her over the moor. There had been some mining done here many years ago, and at the bottom of a depression in the ground he saw an opening fenced off with posts and rails. The fence was old and two of the rails were broken. From below came the yapping of a dog.

"It isn't very deep," she said.

He crawled under one of the rails till his head was over the edge of the shaft. It had been filled in to within about twelve feet of the ground, and he could see the dog, a white Sealyham.

"I don't think he is hurt. Hallo, old chap! All right; we'll fetch you out."

He got up, his pipe in his hand, and his eyes looked at her kindly.

"I have a tow rope up there. I always carry a length of rope when I am touring. I'll fetch it."

She watched him go and she watched him return. She had one of those soft, serious, Madonna-like faces in which the child and the woman meet, but when she smiled her solemnity seemed touched with

white light. There were times when she surprised people with a dignity and a determination which were unexpected in so seemingly fragile and exquisite a creature.

"I'm so grateful to you."

"Oh, that's all right!" he said, smiling.

They liked each other, and each was conscious of this instinctive attraction.

"Now, then."

He selected the strongest of the posts, knotted one end of the rope to it, and dropped the other end down the shaft. Crawling under the fence, he slid down the rope and disappeared from her view. A moment later she heard his voice.

"The dog's all right. Can you be ready to take him from me? I shall have to swarm up with one hand."

"Oh, I am so glad! Yes, I'll be ready."

She crawled under the fence and lay looking down into the shaft, her hands ready to take the dog from him when he climbed up.

"Ready?"

"Yes."

He swarmed up with the dog under his left arm, and in reaching out to take the Sealyham from him her hair touched his face. She flushed slightly, and getting up on her knees with the dog in her arms, wriggled her way under one of the broken bars and stood up.

"I'm so grateful to you."

He emerged and began to unfasten the rope, and she noticed a corner of torn cloth over his right knee.

"I'm afraid you have got in a mess."

"Oh, nothing to hurt! Won't you put the dog down, and we can see whether he limps."

She did so, and the pup was so little the worse that he began to tear round and round, barking uproariously, and ended by flinging himself against her knees.

The man was recoiling the rope.

"He's none the worse."

She glanced at his face, with its smiling eyes, and she was struck by its kindness, the gentleness of the big thing towards the little.

"No, thanks to you."

"I have enjoyed it," he said.

They walked back to the car, and as they reached it the yellow disk of the sun touched one of the western hills and a sheet of light lay all about them. The girl lingered. The man was putting the

rope away in a locker, and she noticed the golf clubs and the suit-cases, and she felt a desire to ask him his name.

"I am so very grateful to you," she said.

He turned to her, smiling.

"Oh, that's all right! I must be moving. It is rather lucky I pulled up here to enjoy the view."

"It was lucky."

He was adjusting the controls, and he went round to the front of the car and started the engine. She had a feeling that the little adventure was at an end, and that he was in a hurry to take the road. She stepped back, calling the dog to heel, and the man climbed into the car.

"Would you mind telling me your name?" she asked.

He gave her a quick look.

"Certainly. Snaith."

"Thank you."

She was about to respond by telling him hers, when he raised his hat and set the car gliding slowly forward down the road. It was almost as though he had meant to rebuff her.

"Good night."

"Good night. And thank you so much."

She watched the car disappear down the winding moorland road, and then, turning northward, over the moor, she began to make her way down into the valley.

"A79567. That's a London number," she reflected. "I suppose he is on his holiday. I wonder what he is?"

Snaith drove on for a couple of miles with the air of a man who is vexed about something. The fierce look had returned to his eyes, but there was less of the spirit of accusation in his fierceness, and more of a questioning gentleness. He had the air of arguing some point with himself.

"Sentiment, but not sentimentality, my friend. Be hard when you have a right to be hard. Are you going to let a pair of dark eyes and a pale face make you forget those others?"

He pulled up again and looked about him with the air of a man reconnoitring the ground before an attack. The valley road branched to the right about a hundred yards from where he had drawn up his car. The sun had set, and already the valley was filling with a shadowiness that was night, and the hills above showed black against the afterglow. Snaith saw a car on the road above, and getting out,

he raised a bonnet flap and pretended to be examining his engine. The other car, a big landaulette, went by with a rush of wind, but he remained bending over his engine until it was out of sight.

He glanced at his watch and then stood listening. A clock in the valley struck the half-hour, the clock of Medlock Abbey. He nodded.

"About time."

He got in and drove on. He went up the next hill, turned in a field gateway, and coming back, took the valley road towards Medlock. It was growing dark now, and it was still more dark when the road entered the woodlands, for the branches of the trees almost met overhead. Snaith drove cautiously for a mile or so. He met no one, and he did not switch on his lamps. He drove still more slowly, watching for some landmark on the left-hand side of the road, and presently he saw it—the grey-green bars of an old gate, which closed the end of a woodland ride. He pulled up, got out, opened the gate, and returning to the car, drove it into the wood. Then he went back and closed the gate, and sitting down under a beech tree, remained there for half an hour, listening.

The silence satisfied him. He walked the fifty yards to where he had left the car under the blackness of the trees. He unlocked one of the suit-cases and took out a flat parcel, something wrapped in brown paper. A minute later he was changing the number plates of his car, working deftly in the darkness, as though this substitution had been done many times before.

After that he produced a packet of sandwiches and a flask, and sitting on the running-board, made a meal. He was in the midst of a great silence, the black silence of deep woodlands on a windless night.

Lady Joan Medlock slept badly that night. She woke about twelve o'clock, and after half an hour's restlessness she left her bed, and going to the window, pulled up the blind.

The coincidence of her doing this thing at this very moment was to be productive of the most fantastic of adventures. She was standing there in the darkness, when a finger of light flashed out momentarily from some window below her and traced a line of light across the lawn.

Now, Joan Medlock was the daughter of her father, that hard, ginger-headed little man who had fought his way up from a Lancashire shop to a peerage and many millions. She was his daughter in her courage and her obstinacy, but she lacked his devouring hardness. Old Medlock had been afraid of nothing, not even of an angry and half-starved mob, and his daughter did just what he would have done had he been alive.

She did not rouse the house. She slipped on her blue silk dressing-gown and her slippers and went downstairs (those immense stairs of which old Medlock had been so proud) with an automatic pistol in her hand. She had not the faintest idea how to use the pistol. It had belonged to her father.

At the foot of the stairs she paused to listen. She heard something, a sound which led her to the great Louis Quinze drawing-room, with its white panelling and its heavy, gilded furniture. The door was ajar. There was a little blur of light somewhere in the room. The switches were by the door frame, and Joan slipped a hand in and touched the first of them, which was connected with the huge chandelier hanging in the centre of the ceiling.

Instantly the room was one brilliant glare of light, and it showed her a man standing with his back to her over against the folding French screen, with its Flemish tapestry and gilded leather. He had been bending over a display case, which was full of trinkets and snuff boxes. He turned sharply towards the door, and she saw that he was masked.

For a moment neither of them spoke. Their astonishment was mutual. The man saw a slim, red-headed girl in a blue dressing-gown, holding a pistol in one small hand—the girl whose dog he had rescued on the moor. The girl saw a tall man in tweeds and a heavy overcoat; the bright light showed her that same rent in the cloth over his right knee. His mask was superfluous.

"Mr. Snaith!" she said, closing the door.

The man's attitude was equally surprising. He pulled off his mask and looked at her protectingly.

"Don't be afraid. There is absolutely nothing for you to fear."

"I'm not afraid," she said; and as though to show that she was not afraid

she sat down in one of the Louis Quinze chairs and laid her pistol aside on a Boule table.

They looked at each other.

"I'm not armed," he said.

"I thought that all modern burglars carried arms."

"I believe so. But, you see, I'm not quite a modern burglar."

"So you admit—"

He smiled at her, and she was aware of that peculiar kindness in his smile.

"I was always ready to face the fact that this adventure would end one day. It has ended. If you wish to call any of your servants—"

She made no movement. She was observing him with complete calmness. The little figure in the chair had a touch of regal dignity.

"You call it an adventure—just that?"

"It is more than that."

"Certainly. It is robbery."

"There are various sorts of robbery. Some forms of robbery are forms of forcible restitution."

"What astonishes me is your assurance. You ought to be feeling horribly uncomfortable."

"I'm not."

"I cannot understand that—in a man—who—"

He interrupted her. She was surprised to find in his eyes a look of accusation, a challenge.

"Wait. May I ask you a question? Do you feel perfectly comfortable?"

"I? Well, under the circumstances, yes."

He gave a glance round the room, this wonderful and royal room.

"Are you sure? May I tell Lady Joan Medlock—for I presume that you are Lady Joan Medlock—"

"I am."

"May I tell her that some of us who took part in a little adventure that ended three years ago are so horribly and fiercely uncomfortable that we have taken up outlawry for the sake of some who are broken."

Her eyelids gave a little flicker.

"You suggest—" she said.

He made a movement with his right hand, like a guide indicating some wonderful landscape.

"Look! This is a superb room. It is one of many superb rooms, and in this house lives a little girl whose father

once kept a shop. I'm not talking clap trap. Lord Medlock was a great man in the matter of making money. I have it that he collected some ten millions during the War. Can you tell me if that is true?"

She nodded, and her pallor seemed to grow more intense.

"Quite true."

"And you inherited it?"

"I did."

He smiled down at her.

"Lord Medlock had no qualms. He was one of the men who was too strong for our illusions. We—had—illusions, we—who had suffered. But has Lady Joan Medlock no qualms? Is she happy and comfortable?"

"What right have you to ask me that question?"

"The right of a man whose career is at an end, a man whose disillusionment was so fierce and bitter that he and others with him chose the life of Robin Hood."

"Stop!" she said suddenly.

Her dignity rose to his challenge. That pale face of hers seemed to unveil itself and to shine with an obstinate and supreme sincerity. In this strange battle between them she wished to be fiercely fair.

"I will answer that question. I am not comfortable, not happy."

"Not as Lord Medlock was happy?"

"No."

His eyes lit up.

"I'm glad. It is possible that by failing here I shall not have failed completely."

She considered those last words of his, her hands resting on the gilded arms of the chair, her eyes slightly downcast, so that the shadows of her lashes lay upon her cheeks.

"You are one of those who hate," she said; "a Bolshevik, a Communist."

"Oh, no, I am not that!" and there was no heat in his answer.

"You envy—you hate all this."

"Do you think I hate beauty?" he asked her, "or that I grudge anyone beautiful things? I wish more beauty, more and more beauty in the world."

"Equality, everything cut up and divided round!"

He came a step nearer.

"Equality, no. Men are not equal. I—and those who work with me—do not ask for equality, but mercy, pity, under-

standing, that the strong should help the weak, not trample on them——"

"As my father did!"

"Yes," he said, "as your father did."

She sprang up with a little gesture of fierceness.

"You dare to say——"

"Isn't it true? Can you deny it?"

Her eyes met his. He saw her eyelids flicker.

"It is true," she said.

She turned away; she began to move restlessly about the room, and he stood and watched her. Her red hair lay like fire upon the blue silk gown. He had a feeling that she was passing through fire.

"And so—you rob!" she said suddenly.

"We take back a few fragments from the feast which we did not share."

"For yourselves?"

"Oh, no, not for ourselves!" he said.

She was astonished, arrested. She came and stood under the great chandelier, where the lights shone among the hundreds of glass lustres. She looked full at him.

"Do you mean that you are philanthropic burglars, that you rob other people——"

"We do not call it robbery, but restitution."

"A useful word. And your victims?"

"Would you call Lord Medlock a victim?"

"Please leave my father out of the argument."

"But that's impossible. You wish to be logical?"

"I do."

"Your father accumulated millions while the broken men we help received a few pence a day. Was that fair? Try and put all prejudice aside and answer that question."

She hesitated. He saw her lips move.

"No, it was not fair," she said.

And then she turned on him fiercely.

"But—you! Tell me, does a double wrong make a right? Aren't you using the devil's tools?"

"We use them on certain people, on the people who would not let us use anything else. Besides, it is debatable——"

"No," she said, "no. But why—do you use them? Are there not other means, other channels? Never was more done than now."

"Miss Medlock," he said, "have you seen? Do you know? Have you experi-



He pulled off his mask and looked at her protectingly

enced? Broken lives, starved lives. They break while people are collecting facts in offices. Do you staunch blood by merely forming a society?"

And suddenly something seemed to break loose in him, a fierce and passionate anger.

"We had ideals. We came back full of the love of man for man, and such men as your father killed that love. Not all of them are like that, thank God. But I have seen the broken lives. We grow bitter, weary, some of us, in trying to help. Apathy! The hurry to forget! Can I forget what happened to me? I had nothing but my gratuity; it was filched from me by a commercial shark. I was but one of hundreds. My wife fell ill. I lost her. I should not have lost her if I had not gone to the War. I have been luckier since then; I have a niche in the world——"

He broke off. He seemed to remember himself. He gave a little laugh.

"Or rather—I had," he said. "Don't you think that we had better end this and rouse your servants? I won't cause you any trouble."

She looked at him intently.

"You accept the situation?"

"I do. I do not believe in violence. I shall accept the facts and say nothing."

"Nothing of what you have told me?"

"Not one word. The others will carry on."

"But supposing I tell?" she asked.

"You cannot tell," he said, "unless you are the child of your father."

She remained very still.

"You extraordinary man! Is it just vanity or the love of adventure?"

"Do you think I like breaking into houses?"

"I don't know," she said. "I don't know. My father was an adventurer, and his adventures were with cotton and coal and ships. But you! I know what I ought to be doing—the conventional thing, screaming up the stairs for the servants; but I am not going to do the conventional thing. Would you mind going out by the way you came?"

Their eyes met.

"You mean it?"

"I do."

He half turned to one of the windows, but she called him back.

"Wait! I can't quite see the right and the wrong in this. My father was

wrong; you are wrong; but am I wrong in my own way, also? I want to think it out. If I let you go on parole, will you come and see me to-morrow?"

"Of course," he said, "if I can help."

"Where is your car?"

"In the woods."

"If I let you go——"

"I shall keep any promise. I can drive on to Telford and put up there."

She stood up.

"Come to tea to-morrow."

"I will."

He gave her a slight bow and turned again to the window.

"Good night, Lady Joan. Some people can be kind to their dogs, but you——"

"I want to convince you that you are wrong, Mr. Snaith—almost as wrong as my father was. Good night."

She saw him disappear through the window, and she closed it after him picked up her pistol, switched off the lights, and went silently upstairs.

"Am I an idiot, or am I not?" she thought; "but if he comes to-morrow I think I shall believe in him."

He did come. He drove up to the abbey in that anonymous old car of his, with the golf bag and the suit-cases bundled into the back seat. He had resubstituted the original number plates, and he was wearing a different suit.

He was introduced to Aunt Mary, a pale copy of her dead brother, an apologetic little woman who whimpered in broad Lancashire. They had tea in the stone summer-house, whose classic portico gave on a great yew walk set with statuary—busts of Roman emperors and figures of athletes and dancing girls. Lord Medlock had been very proud of his statuary.

"Come and see Julius!" had been one of his jokes. "He would have made a fine mill owner, would Julius."

Presently Aunt Mary disappeared, for it had been her business in life to appear and disappear at the proper moment.

Lady Joan Medlock and Mr. Snaith wandered down to the terrace walk above the lake and watched the swans moving on the water.

"So you trusted me," she said.

"You thought I should vanish?"

"I was not sure."

She looked out across the lake to the open parkland and the rolling woods. Her face was austere, vaguely troubled.

"Mr. Snaith," she said, "I'm the daughter of a business man; I'm Lancashire; I want results. If you could prove to me——"

"That we Robin Hoods have something to show? That we have not pocketed the proceeds?"

"Exactly."

He smiled at her.

"Certainly. I could take you over our factory. I could show you broken lives and lives that have been mended."

"Where?"

"Here, there, and everywhere."

"Would you show me?"

"With pleasure."

"When?"

"Say next week-end? You see, I work during the week and I am Robin Hood on Saturdays and Sundays. Would you come?"

"Yes, I'll come," she said. "Would it be possible for you, I and Aunt Mary to make a week-end tour in one of our cars?"

"I see no objection to it," he said.

And then he spoke with sudden intimate seriousness.

"Lady Joan, if you come you will see people who look on me as nothing more than an agent. We don't pose as the dispensers of complacent favours. I am supposed to be merely the agent of certain rich people who choose to be nameless."

"I understand," she said. "It is not one of the many forms of vanity!"

"No," he answered, "I hope not."

She went with him. Her big car spread its speed over half the Midlands and the south, with Aunt Mary sitting like a little yellow joss beside her niece. Whenever they paid a visit they left the car and Lord Medlock's sister in some non-committal corner of the town or village.

Joan saw things. She saw both broken lives and mended lives. She saw faces brighten to Snaith, and the kindness in his eyes. But it was a compassionate, disinterested kindness; it did not advertise the ego or rub its hands complacently with vain self-satisfaction. She would have hated him had he been smug.

"We are the poor ghosts of a world's broken promises," he told her. "Sometimes I think with the Jesuits——"

"No. I'm just plain Lancashire," she said.

But the conflict was bound to come, and it developed late on the Sunday after-

noon. They had run through Guildford and up over the Merrow Downs, and here Joan stopped the car to enjoy one of the finest landscapes in the south. She got out, and Snaith followed her. Aunt Mary seemed to understand that she was to remain in the car.

They wandered together across the turf and away from the Sunday crowd of cars and picnic parties. It was a blue day, with the pine woods almost black upon the further hills and the distant Sussex downs floating like ghost hills above the sea.

"Beautiful!" she said, standing at gaze.

And then she spoke of the thing that was in her mind, not looking at him, but still gazing towards the south.

"My father was wrong. And you, too, are wrong, though less wrong than he was. I feel it, without being able to put all I feel into words."

"He took for himself. We take for others."

"You are wrong," she said.

"I would like your reasons."

She remained silent a moment, faintly frowning.

"It's not that I'm a little middle-class girl with all the middle-class view of things. But aren't you mixing up love and hate, and using hatred as an excuse, a means?"

"You haven't learnt to hate."

"Mr. Snaith," she said very simply, "I hope I never shall. Has hatred—even a sincere hatred—ever helped the world? Is not the other thing, the thing that matters?"

"Yes, if people had it. If your father had had it. But it is because men have made such a mocking shop of the love of man for man——"

"That you take their weapon and use it? You are wrong. Oh, I'm not a prig! I'd rather like to think of you as scrambling down that shaft to rescue a dog."

He looked at her. She was very calm, passionately calm, and somehow he felt that he had come up against the white wall of her determination. She would be unmovable, the little red-headed woman with her serious eyes and all her Lancashire stubbornness.

"So that's that," he said.

She gave him a sudden challenging look.

"But not the end. It is my move, I think."

"Please make it."

"You give up the hate in your business, or I shall close my account."

"You mean that you will hand me over——"

"I do."

He smiled.

"Thank you. If that is the only alternative——"

She shook her head.

"It isn't," she said.

She turned again to the landscape and pointed towards it.

"My father never saw that. He hadn't the eyes to see it. Perhaps I have. Don't let us be bitter. I think I told you that I was not happy; but isn't it possible that if I did certain things——"

He watched her face.

"What things?"

And suddenly her eyes met his.

"Let's bargain. You give up your hate, I give up my money—as merely my

money. Supposing you Robin Hoods came in out of Sherwood and joined with me."

At first he would not believe it. Phantasy seemed added to phantasy. Life did not work like that, save in sociological romances and American picture plays. He was standing on solid English chalk talking to a Lancashire girl whose father had begun life in a shop.

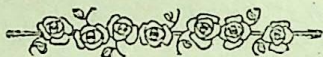
But she convinced him.

"We could call it the Medlock Trust. Don't you see the possibilities, how it might spread, what a force it would be in this world of hate and hurry and greed?"

"Good God!" he said. "There would be no other war memorial like it! A living thing, a hand, a heart, not some mere bit of stone set up in a dusty street."

"Well, help me to make it true," she asked.

"I will," he said.



WHEN SPRING COMES BACK

THE brook is choked with yellow leaves,
Acorns and rifled chestnut burrs
Summer is gathered up in sheaves,
Another year joins the old years.

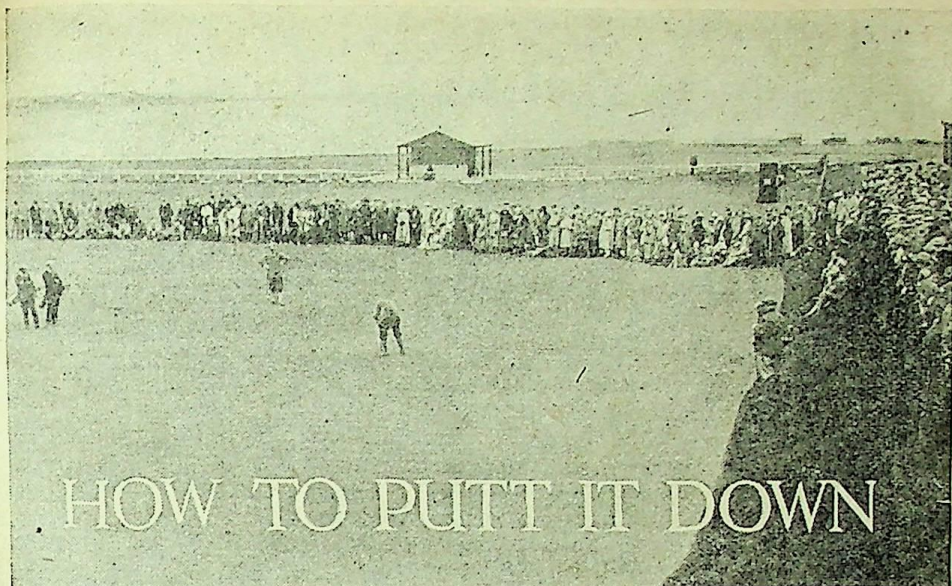
So short a time ago the spring
Came laughing through the April rain,
The credulous heart did naught but sing,
And painted hopes sailed by again.

Ah, what a year it was to be
Of purpose ripening in the sun!
And what a year of love, said we;
And now the year is almost done;

Little is ours of it to spend—
Some sapless days of glory reft,
The heart so shadowed by the end,
It hath no joy in what is left.

Yea, naught remains but as before
To dream, the waiting winter through,
That, when the spring comes back once more,
Next year—ah, next!—But what of you?

RICHARD LEIGH.



HOW TO PUTT IT DOWN

The 18th at St. Andrews. How many championships have been settled on this historic square of turf!

Photo: Sport and General

By **A. G. HAVERS**
The Open Champion

One of the finest putters in the world here gives some interesting and valuable advice on this great art many of us would acquire

SUCCESS in this most tantalizing phase of golf is greatly dependent on confidence. To develop confidence, practice is necessary, and if it is the right kind of practice (not merely knocking the ball anyhow up to, and into, the hole, but putting for something), that confidence will go to those who have not got it naturally.

Until you have learned to strike the ball accurately, cleanly, with your putter, there is small hope of consistency. When you are best satisfied with your play on the greens you will always find that there is a nice-sounding "click" as the ball is struck, and until this is acquired, you should not cease to practice.

Slovenly hitting of the ball may not always mean failure, but so essential is a clean stroke that no man can hope to develop confidence without it. Never be satisfied with the mere fact that the ball went into the hole; never let a satisfactory result lull you into a sense of having attained perfection, for success can never be yours until you can "hear" that you have struck well and truly—that "click."

Just as in every other stroke at golf, it is essential to let the ball be well on its way to the hole before you have a look at it. One very common cause of players taking their heads up before they have by adequate concentration sent the ball correctly on its journey is: insufficient attention to the direction required, and the nature of the grass over which the ball will have to travel.

In this respect let me say that the careful putter is the wise putter. He should look at his line from the back of the ball; walk at least half-way to the hole and study the quality of the grass, its thickness or its semi-absence. Having done that it will be much more easy to get well set in your mind the "strength" which is essential to send the ball to the hole at such a pace as to leave hope of its welcome disappearance in the tin. Studying the line of the putt from both ends should leave no doubt in your mind as to the correct direction, but the questions of "strength" and the "borrowing" of ground will always remain to be settled by the judgment of the striker.

What is called a bold driver is often a fellow who slams the ball quick and hard because he is afraid of taking so much time as will give him the opportunity of wondering whether he will make some sort of mess of his shot.

A curious mixture of restraint and boldness makes the good putter. That restraint and accuracy of striking may be developed by intelligent study, especially if the "bump of weight," as the phrenologists say, is in the brain of the pupil.

Styles of putting are many, and quite a lot of them good. There is one thing in this respect that I should

always recommend anyone to try, whether short or tall, whether he putts with the right hand, as (so I am told) W. J. Travis did, or with both, as is the common way.

That thing is: The body should be just so much arched as will cause the line of vision to the ball to form a rectangle with the line of the putt.

Those of you who have seen Jack White putt will quickly grasp what I mean; in fact it is only necessary to have seen a photograph to get the idea. You will notice his body with its graceful bend forward as he addresses the ball. This gives to him, as it does to others, a position from which it is easiest to get the exact line required. By its use the glance to the hole and back to the ball becomes a simple matter which entails no body movement at all; and, at the most, a slight turning of the head while rigidly retaining the original stance.

If eyes are not directly over the ball, there may be shuffling of feet after taking the stance, and the vision for direction is defective. To try to putt with a half cross view of the line is almost comparable to trying to aim with a rifle when not looking along the barrel.

Good tuition will improve a man's putting, but I always try to give my pupils an opportunity of finding their own sal-



Photo: optical.

Finish of putt. Note the perfect physical balance and compactness of the champion, despite his unusual height

vation. To illustrate why I think this course wise, I will mention the fact that three famous players who became known as the best putters the game has ever known (W. J. Travis, Willie Park, and Jack White), had their different methods, all, of course, good.

Mr. Travis, I have read, used what may be termed a "reverse overlap." That is to say: his *left* forefinger was placed over the little finger of the *right* hand, so that the grip of the club rested mainly in his right hand.

Willie Park, it is said, used a long, bent-necked club, and addressed the ball with the blade "open," pulling the ball to the

hole with a turn of the right wrist.

Jack White, with an ordinary putting cleeke, uses both hands in making the stroke—a vast difference as compared with Mr. Travis, who must have given the club almost entirely to his right hand when striking the ball.

"Touch" is essential to the best putting; but even without that quality being highly developed it is possible to attain much success. James Braid, judging from what older players have told me, was at one period forced to concentrate upon putting practice for so long as enabled him to become one of the finest putters in the world, in spite of the fact that no one would have accused him of being naturally endowed with a delicate sense of touch.

Great player as Braid was in other respects, he, as you should do, practised, and it was his strength of will which caused him to be regarded as the best of putters for several years. When at his best, he kept his left hand still with the exception of a slight bend of the wrist. His almost exaggerated follow-through was indicative of his determination to ensure that the face of the club should not turn just before or just after striking the ball.

There is a tendency for some players to

get disheartened with their putting. To them I would say: "Look at the cases of Mr. Hilton and Harry Vardon." It is possible that few players in the world, from novices to open champions, have tried so many methods of putting as these two. Whenever they found something going wrong they switched off on to some other style.

Take Mr. Hilton, for instance. He once did very well in big tournaments, while putting with one hand. Such a drastic change needs courage; but it is possible to think that, if you are doing badly with both hands, you are in some sort of sense lessening your margin for error by only using one! It has been told to me that Harry Vardon has been known to putt with unusual success while using but one hand.

Here is another method for you: J. G. Sherlock holds the club with hands so far apart that he must be a right-hand putter, and still this can only be regarded as a sound method if, as he does, you use the left hand as little more than a steadying influence while swinging the club.

Here is a fine combination for players to try and attain to: the arched back of Jack White, Mr. Hilton's absence of body movement and Mr. Travis's firm wrists.

Older brother professionals have told me that the American amateur used to hit the ball from the shoulders, and I have tried that method to be good, although I, as all of you should do, preferred what seemed to me my natural manner.

In the cultivation of the firm-wrist idea, however, there is a danger to be guarded against, and that is the cramped or locked wrist at the moment of striking. I could mention one or two of our famous golfers who have suffered from this complaint during periods of indifferent play on the greens.

There is a remedy which occurs to me while thinking over the putting of Harry Vardon, who, in spite of the fact that his short putting has often been the despair of his admirers, plays his long putts as well as anyone ever did. That remedy lies in pressing the hands slightly forward before taking the head of the club back. There should not be a very accentuated pushing forward of the handle of the club, but just sufficient to ensure that the head of the club goes backwards before the hands do. This ensures an absence of that stiffening-up action which follows when club and arms are in a rigid, straight line. It ensures that there is the slightest bit of freedom or play about the



Photos: Sport and General

Two snaps of Havers, showing his different you will see, the champion believes in ad- in front

grip (1) for driving, (2) for putting. As dressing the ball on the green, both and behind



(1) Vardon, none too sure close up, is perhaps the best of approach putters—he even uses his putter off a rough bank
(2) J. H. Taylor ensuring direction by resting right elbow on thigh
(3) James Braid at end of putt



back swing, more naturally. Did it not, there would be an awkward stiffening and loss of direction.

Beware of "drag" on a putt; it is often the resort of a player who desires to give the hole a chance, but, at the same time, is afraid of going too far. To attempt to put "drag" on a ball with a putter is bad. Far better is it to use a club with a slightly lofted face, an iron or, say, a mid-iron. Then the ball should be hit as near the shaft as is possible.

By doing this you will be surprised at the amount of retarding effect that is put upon the ball.

Still, the best of putters strike the ball in such fashion that it runs freely, the very reverse of drag being imparted to it. When that is so the ball has been hit on the equator or above it. The result is

that it clings more closely to the green, and, as a consequence, given accuracy of direction, is more likely to fall into the hole. A ball which reaches the middle of the hole at a certain speed, with a drag on it, is less likely to drop than a ball travelling at similar speed with "top" on it.

Reverting to my body-still contention,

I feel that someone is sure to recall poor Tom Ball's method as contradictory to that which I have written. I know that Tom used to move his body with a wonderfully rhythmic sway that nobody else in my experience has been able to emulate. He was one of the best of our famous putters; but Tom, with his wee compact body, and his feet so remarkably symmetrical that it was pretty to see him walk, was almost a golfing law unto himself.

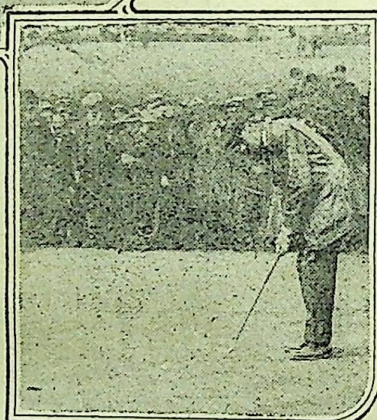
Tom could do that sort of thing, but I am sure that he would not have recommended anyone else to try it. I

wrists, without the danger of any lateral movement that will send the ball off the line.

Another very important thing: feel your bodily weight resting on the heels. In bending down to the ball, players are often apt to topple slightly forward on to the toes. When that happens there is an almost fatal loss of firmness of stance, and yet I have seen many who have been off their putting because of that one great thing—the loss of balance which is the result of insufficient weight being given to the rocklike steadiness of the heels.

When you putt, you should feel as if a motor-bus could not knock you off your balance, for that is the only way to correctitude in the taking of the delicate stroke which is essential to accuracy. "Feeling your heels" will stop your body movement for the reason that your position is so secure that shoulders, arms and hands are sure to work in harmony and easily. Try it and you will quickly notice the feeling of confidence which it brings.

I strongly recommend the shut blade for the short putt; in fact to my mind it is absolutely essential, although a few good putters have shown the merest suspicion of an opening of the blade. In the case of a long putt, the circumstance is altered, for the blade, with the longer



Photos: Sports and General

know that Tom, quite unconsciously, was the means of causing some players to go off their putting because folk who watched his tiny turn of the knees and his graceful, slight body sway, thought it all looked so dainty (the results were so good, too) that attempts at imitation followed naturally, but none the less disastrously.

When you are off your putting, practice is the one great thing to get you right again. In this respect, I recollect Tom Ball telling

me what he did. There was a member of his club, who, though of double-

figure handicap, was putting well down to scratch. Tom would concede one up on the nine-hole putting course and play for some small amount per round, just as an additional incentive.

That was when he felt that he was not at his best on the greens. On one occasion he lost ten rounds in succession to the novice, but getting back to his game, wiped them all off, and afterwards enjoyed quite a long period of his best form on the greens in big matches.

His contention was that this practice "tightened up" his putting better than going out alone; and I can quite believe it, for

the ever-cheery Tom was not the fellow for solitary study.

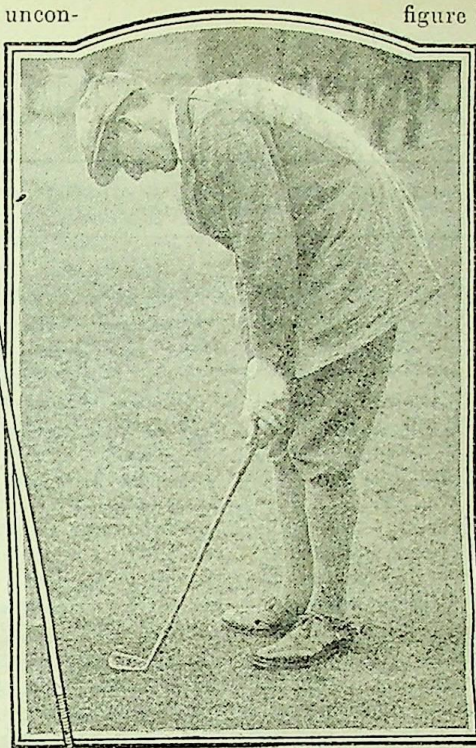


Photo: Sport and General.

Well on your heels and don't look after the ball too soon

The Explanation

"I CAN'T stand this sort of thing much longer," exclaims the angry father to his son just down from the 'Varsity for the vacation. "Two weeks ago you wrote for fifty pounds. Now you want twenty-five. What does it mean?"

The beautifully garbed lad ceased polishing his carefully manicured finger nails for a moment.

"Well, you asked me to economize," he protested.

* * *

Translated

"HAVE you got a book called 'The Week of Ethel'?" asked the lady of the bookseller's assistant.

The assistant failed to recognize the title, and sought the help of her chief.

"Does the lady lisp?" asked the bookseller.

"Yes," replied the assistant, "I think she does."

"Then give her 'The Weaker Vessel.'"

Mistaken Diagnosis

THE poor fellow lay by the roadside, groaning and writhing with pain. A policeman, hearing the groans, hastened towards him.

"What's the matter? Had an accident?" he asked.

"I ate one, too—I ate one, too!" murmured the sufferer.

"Poison!" was the intelligent officer's diagnosis. Poison cases, he remembered, need immediate treatment; and hot salt and water, he had been taught, was an excellent emetic. Hastily he procured a jugful. Then he administered it.

The result was astonishing. When the patient was in a fit state to take notice of mundane affairs he angrily demanded the reason for such treatment. On being told his fury increased.

"Poisoned! I wasn't poisoned, you fool!" he yelled. "Why, I-812 is the number of the car that knocked me down!"

What the policeman said is not recorded

CIRCUMSTANCE

By LUMLEY DEAKIN

I SUPPOSE Torrington Pluen ought not to have married her, knowing, as he did, that Society would have given its favourite lapdog to have been able to peer into her past. But, if there were no sinners, there would be no forgiveness, and forgiveness is the most beautiful quality to be found in mortals. Society admitted that Zelia was clever, fascinating, and highly diverting as a companion, but she had been concerned, directly and indirectly, in so many *affaires du cœur* that Society regarded Pluen as a sheep being led to the slaughter when he went through the marriage ceremony with her. Pluen, however, was much stronger of resolution than his contemporaries imagined, and as his love for Zelia was unfeigned, as he believed himself to be the luckiest man in the world since she had consented to be his wife, and as his fortune was considerable, he managed practically to bring Society to heel. But the last laugh is always a brutal one, and the tragedy that occurred at Brewster House, on the Kentish coast, twelve months after the marriage, seemed to justify the emphasizing of that laugh.

The Pluens did not entertain lavishly, but seldom was there a week-end when Brewster House was empty of guests. It was the ninth day of March, and the guests at the house were only three in number—Captain Hannett and his wife, and Grimshaw, the solicitor who had managed the affairs of Pluen's father.

Zelia was very bright and attractive that day, and Grimshaw, who had criticized the marriage more severely than anyone else, was compelled to bow the knee in submission to her charms. Zelia was a woman of thirty-two, with jet-black hair and a Spanish cast of feature. She had many accomplishments, could play the guitar as perfectly as she played the piano; she sang divinely, and could manipulate all the arts and artifices of the actress. All these features were probably

accentuated by the contrast between her and Pluen. He was grave, extremely reticent, and had the habit of regarding her, not as his wife, but as a father might regard a favourite child. He was her senior by, probably, ten years.

Between afternoon tea and dinner, Captain Hannett's wife, who had been sadly overshadowed during the day by the brilliancy of her hostess, confided in the old solicitor that her heart was troubling her lest Society should learn of her visit to Brewster House.

"Zelia," she said, "is a darling, and of course I'm broad-minded enough to understand Pluen's love for her; but—you know what Society is."

Half-an-hour before dinner there came the uninvited guest, Tony Ross. Zelia was dressing at the time, but Pluen was in the smoke-room when a servant brought word of the new arrival. Now, Pluen, at one time, indeed, ten years before, had known Tony Ross for what he was—a dissolute Bond Street loungee to whom everybody and everything was fair game, one who hadn't the courage to accuse a man or the chivalry to acquit a woman. He had been out of the country for years. There had been trouble, out of which he narrowly scraped, and his friends had sent him to the colonies.

Pluen left the smoke-room and went into the hall, and the moment he set eyes on Ross he scented mischief. Tony was stouter; his face showed signs of dissipation. There was intemperance, rather than viciousness, in his eyes. He greeted Torrington Pluen in a loud, boisterous voice.

"Well, Pluen, this gets me! So you're married—and to Zelia! Say, now, that takes the punch out of me." And he would have gone on shouting in the hall, if Pluen, moved by nervousness, hadn't dragged him into the smoke-room. He had no time to lock the door or to think of a way out of his difficulties

before Captain Hannett, having dressed, sauntered into the room, and, behind him, old Grimshaw. Tony Ross surveyed them casually.

"Your friends, Pluen?"

"Yes," said Pluen, biting his lips because the insolence of the man was so studied. And there was something in the manner of Ross that warned Pluen of secrets that might threaten his happiness. Ross turned to the others.

"You'll have to excuse my get-up," he said, pointing to his dusty boots and lounge suit. "I only arrived this morning, and I've come down from Liverpool. I haven't brought any dress clothes with me, Pluen, so unless you like to lend me some, I'll have to crave your indulgence."

"I haven't invited you to stay to dinner," said Pluen, boldly, whereupon Tony laughed loudly, swearing that it was a good joke. To the others he said: "I've known Pluen for years; he was a friend of mine in the old days; and I know——" he stopped, because at that instant his eyes met Pluen's, and he must have seen the stiffening of the lips and the lowering of the eyebrows. "And I know Mrs. Pluen," he finished.

He began to recount his adventures in the colonies, and as they were not unentertaining, Captain Hannett and Grimshaw affected interest in the stories. Pluen, on the other hand, was wondering what would happen when Zelia came down. He was well able to size up his man.

It had been said of Ross ten years ago that it was impossible to insult him. Pluen knew that he would stay to dinner, even if he had to force his way into the dining-room.

"I've been out there ten years," Ross was saying, "and I know men who've been there thirty, and haven't made one quarter of what I touched. Found an oil-well, and sold it to a Portuguese crowd for fifty thousand——"

The first gong went. Pluen said: "Excuse me a moment," went out of the room and ran upstairs. Zelia was coming along the corridor from her room. She had given an extra half-hour to her toilet that night, probably with the idea of completing her conquest over Grimshaw. She was wearing a dress of pale amber-coloured satin; an old topaz and pearl ornament—Pluen's gift—de-

pended from her neck; pearls threaded her black hair.

"What's wrong, Torry?" she asked.

He took hold of her right wrist, and led her back to her room. He was more agitated than she had ever seen him before, but he tried hard to control himself.

"Look here, Zelia, sweetheart," he said, as though he meant to convince her of his faith in her before she had a chance to assume that he doubted her, "there's a man downstairs—you know him—I knew him ten years ago—Ross—Tony Ross." He spoke very rapidly, and with his eyes turned from hers. He dreaded the cry of dismay; he didn't want to see the flush of guilt which he believed was there; and he would have been ready, in that minute, if she had appealed to him, to go back down the stairs and throw Ross out of the house. But all his surmises were wrong. Zelia clapped her hands as she exclaimed, "Tony Ross, back from the dead! This is news!" And with all the ecstasy of a child who has been told that a favourite uncle has returned after many days, she ran gaily downstairs and into the smoke-room.

Torrington Pluen was not an unobservant man. As she went out of the room, leaving him there, standing by her dressing-table, he said beneath his breath: "My God! what courage. Her heart is breaking, but she's going to brave it out."

Down in the smoke-room, Zelia welcomed Tony Ross just as effusively as she had welcomed Grimshaw and Captain Hannett. She told the others, even while Tony was holding her hands, that she had known him for years and years; they were the best of friends, and she was delighted that he had come back from abroad.

But Zelia was not so clever an actress as she believed herself to be. Tony, rather overcome by the nature of her greeting, appeared to be stupid and lacking all decision. She rang for a servant, and gave instructions that Mr. Ross should be taken to a room, adding that they would delay dinner until he was ready. Then she turned to Grimshaw and Hannett, and began to talk of her friendship for Tony, how she had known his father, his brothers, and his sister. Then she went out, ostensibly to join Captain Hannett's wife. And the

moment the door closed on her, Hannett, looking at Grimshaw, said:

"God help Pluen! It's come. This is what I've been expecting ever, since he married her. - She thinks she's fooling us, but I can see through it, can't you?"

"Easily," said Grimshaw, and added an invocation to Hannett's.

Tony Ross came down to dinner with abundant apologies for his dress; but after he had tasted wine the old insolence returned. He addressed Zelia by her Christian name, and though she laughed and chatted with him across the table, it didn't require the keen eye of a lawyer to see that she was suffering agonies of doubt. Pluen himself sat like a statue at the head of the table, and when he did look at his guests, it was in a challenging, defiant way. Zelia hurried the dinner, perhaps a little tactlessly. Ross had been helping himself pretty freely to wine, and before leaving the table he insisted on repeating, for the benefit of the ladies, the story of his fortunes abroad. His face was flushed almost to the colour of mahogany. He swayed in his chair at the table. He spoke incoherently. Then, of a sudden, he seemed to gather together all that remained of mental strength, and striking the table a blow that made the service shiver and rattle, he said:

"Fifty thousand, that's what I'm worth! And why have I given ten of the best years of my life to get it? Because there's one woman that means more to me than all the rest of the world put together."

The other guests tried to break in with a new topic. Poor Pluen's face was as white as the napery. Ross, refusing to be quieted, managed to get to his feet by holding on to the edge of the table. He raised his wine-glass.

"Pluen," he said, thickly and vulgarly, "I ought to hate you, but I don't. I congratulate you on having won the finest woman that ever breathed." He took his eyes from Pluen's, and fixed the lawyer with them. "Old man," he said, "you're a lawyer. After dinner I'm going to show you a will of mine, properly signed and sealed. You can read it through, just to satisfy Zelia that it's A 1. Every cent that Tony Ross possesses is willed to her. That's what I think about her."

White, and terrible in his silent passion, poor Pluen rose. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue. One could hear and *feel* the "Damn you and your will!" although it was never uttered. Spurred on by sneering glances of Mrs. Hannett, Zelia figuratively leaped between her husband and the sot of a man on whom in an earlier day she had smiled. She laughed. There was no mirth in the laugh, and none realized that more than Zelia herself.

"Tony was always a comedian. What? . . . Ah! Tony, you're a dear, generous boy, but a glassful of wine plays havoc with your sense of proportion. You must pull yourself together, spruce yourself up, and pay court to some delightful woman who will help to protect you from—from yourself. Tony. . . . Who'll sing?"

They moved to the drawing-room. The contretemps was averted. Mrs. Hannett, who had prepared the loveliest story for Society's ears, could scarcely contain herself as she left the table; Captain Hannett, as keen as his wife in the hunt for a trouble belonging to somebody else, placed his lips whistle-shape, as he glanced at Grimshaw, the solicitor.

The tragedy began in the drawing-room. Tony was oblivious to everybody save Zelia, and she was looking at her husband, as to say, "Bear with me a little while and I will explain everything to your satisfaction."

The thin-featured Mrs. Hannett tried to communicate with the devil in Pluen's heart.

"How happy Mrs. Pluen is to-night. They must be very old friends."

"They are," said Pluen, unable to think of any other answer. "They knew each other as boy and girl."

And about the same time, Captain Hannett was saying to Grimshaw: "There are all the ingredients of a tragedy here, to-night. . . ."

Ross whispered in Zelia's ear. She shot an appealing glance at her husband, then opened the French windows and stepped out on the lawn.

The other guests burst into an animated discussion of some point in golf—this out of respect for Pluen's feelings. Five minutes passed; then, came the report of a revolver shot, followed by the scream of a woman. . . .

But let the front grounds of Brewster House be described. The lawns and landscape gardens covered about five acres, and a high stone wall divided those front grounds from the dense pine wood that stretched for three or four miles towards the coast.

Also, let it be explained to the reader what happened immediately before and after Zelia and Tony Ross passed through the French windows into the front grounds.

Tony said, in a whisper: "I was dead serious about that will."

Zelia said—fearing a further outburst: "I'm just suffocated in here, Tony; talk to me outside."

They walked probably four hundred yards from the house, then, of a sudden, Tony stopped, gripped Zelia by the wrist, and said: "My head's quite clear, although you may think differently, seeing what's happened to-night. I came back from the colonies to see you—only you. What do I find? That you're married."

Zelia was simply weighed down by that sense of tragedy which had begun to assert itself at dinner. She was a woman who had made a very careful analysis of the world and its ways, and of human nature in certain circumstances. She knew the potency of a glass of wine on a weak-minded man. She said:

"Tony, we have never been anything save good friends. Try to realize that I've married one of the dearest men in the world—one who has risked a great deal in marrying me. Don't make the situation harder for either of us. God knows, we have few friends left."

But Ross's brain wasn't quite strong enough, under the influence of the wine, to throw off the desire to be melodramatic. He pulled a revolver from his pocket, and presented it at his right temple.

"Zelia," he said, "if you don't promise to run away with me this very night, I shall blow out my brains in these grounds."

Thinking to laugh him out of his mood, she stepped away from him, saying: "Don't make an ass of yourself, Tony; Captain Hannett and Mr. Grimshaw may have come out for a stroll and overheard you."

"Deuce take them," said Tony, savagely. "You don't believe the thing's

loaded. Eh? Look!" and he fired into the trees immediately in front of him.

It was then that the scream of fear escaped her—the scream heard by those in the house. Quick as an antelope in its stride she sprang at Ross, wrenched the revolver from his weak hand and flung it away into the flower beds.

Tony Ross laughed foolishly, took two more paces, and then . . . *dropped dead*; his crown pierced by a bullet hole!

* * * * *

The circumstances were such that no one in Brewster House—not even the husband who loved her as he loved life itself—could think of a loophole through which Zelia might escape. She gave her evidence before the coroner and his jury; she could tell only of that set forth above. The jury didn't believe her; that was obvious to everyone present at the inquest. The evidence against her was so overwhelming.

Grimshaw spoke of the will made in her favour; Captain Hannett had to confess that he knew Tony and Zelia had been friends in the past.

The foreman of the jury questioned the Captain:

"Only one shot was heard?"

"Only one, but there was a strong north-westerly wind blowing."

"You, I believe, found the revolver; did you examine the chambers immediately?"

"I did; one shot had been fired."

"Mr. Ross was shot through the crown. Have you any theories to advance why he should have received the bullet there?"

"If he were kneeling——" the Captain suggested.

"Or pleading, on his knees?"

"Exactly."

"The grounds were searched, of course, and nobody was found there save Mrs. Pluen. She was not in a condition to give a connected story of the tragedy?"

"She was dazed."

The doctor who had been called in by the distracted Pluen, replied to the coroner:

"It is impossible to suppose that Mr. Ross might have shot himself. Had he done so the wound would have been scorched. I should say that the shot was

fired from a distance of twenty or thirty yards."

"Has the bullet been found?"

"No, it entered the crown, passed out of the base of the neck, and has not been discovered."

The police evidence was to the effect that less than ten minutes after the affair, the grounds and the immediate neighbourhood were searched, but nobody was to be found.

Society sat down on its most comfortable chair and wrote hundreds of letters of condolence; they were all addressed to Mr. Pluen. He read some of them to Zelia, always adding a phrase that wasn't there. . . . "Of course, it is monstrous that dear Mrs. Pluen should be suspected for one minute," or something similar. The newspapers battered on the tragedy, gorged themselves. Zelia's photograph was reproduced a thousand times. Then, the cheap and nasty Society weeklies came out with those hideous, criminal paragraphs after this style: "Is it true that a well-known gentleman whose name has been figuring in the dailies so frequently, is satisfied that a woman's past is about the one thing that won't yield to soap and water? What's he going to do about it?"

There were brutal hints about his "duty" to Society, and the chances of there being one more proof of the law's partiality for the rich.

Pluen bore up very finely during the few days immediately following the tragedy in the grounds. Zelia was charged; that was inevitable, but his sole concern was that she should believe in his loyalty to her. He spent a small fortune in legal fees, and in the end, the law decided that it must have something stronger than circumstantial evidence before it could commit her. She was acquitted, left the court on her husband's arm, and drove back with him to Brewster House. One of the descriptive newspaper reporters said of the final scene in court that "Pluen's grandeur of bearing as he gave evidence in defence of his wife, and the skilful manner in which he combated the strategy of the prosecuting counsel, found a parallel in the beautiful dignity of the white-faced, handsome woman who shamed the inquisitive, well-dressed crowd in the gallery by her silent scorn of them."

Back at Brewster House, Zelia main-

tained the reticence which had marked her manner from the first. She did not offer to protest her innocence, not even when she was alone with him; she didn't thank him for the chivalry he had shown towards her; she didn't give way to any of those paroxysms that one might reasonably look for in a highly-strung woman who has emerged from a terrible ordeal principally through the splendid loyalty and unswerving faith of a husband. There was no "You do believe in me, Torrington—don't you?" She had given her explanation of what happened in the grounds and there was now the attitude of "Believe me, or disbelieve me."

Zelia was awaiting another verdict, now—the verdict of Society. During the months she had been Pluen's wife she had, for his sake, done her level best to propitiate that Society; there were scores of women who owed her more, for timely intervention and financial aid, than they would ever be able to repay. What was to be their attitude?

Society put it very bluntly to Torrington Pluen that if he didn't wish to be ostracized he would seek the aid of the law in severing the bonds between them and his wife. He curled his lips in scorn, but not for a second did he play the martyr. Zelia came on the letter from the secretary of one of the clubs conveying, regretfully, that the name of Torrington Pluen was to be erased from the list of members. He found her reading it, laughed at her grave, pale face from which all the smiles had long since departed, tore the letter into fragments and said: "That's what I think about it, Zelia. Forget it." Still, no word of gratitude from her.

Long-standing visiting engagements were cancelled—by those who had sent out the invitations. Pluen laughed again, and began to devote himself to study; he seldom left Brewster House. Once, he had held hopes of a political career; he was prospective candidate for a southern constituency. That was knocked on the head. He said to Zelia: "I'm not sorry; I don't think I'm built for that sort of thing." She scarcely lifted her eyes as she replied: "Lady Markton used to say that there would be a place on the Government benches for you as soon as Lord Markton was——" "Rubbish," said Pluen; "Lady Markton makes 'pin

money' out of those remarks; besides, Lord Markton isn't likely ever to form a government."

Society, feeling that it was kicking against concrete, dropped Pluen altogether; he might have dropped out of existence.

Then came rumours of dissension in Parliament, and the prophets of the Press talked of early dissolution. Pluen, reading the reports, allowed political enthusiasm to overcome discretion; he exclaimed in her presence: "There is something in Markton, after all. By Jove! I wonder how he'll handle that pet Insurance Reform of his? He knows what I think about it." (Lord Markton had said in public that Torrington Pluen was the only man in the country who thoroughly understood the intricacies of his Bill.) He stopped short, for Zelia's bosom was rising and falling and her lips were tightly clenched. He burst into that vague laugh of his on the instant. "But it doesn't interest me a bit, really," he finished lamely. . . . "Slip on your tennis shoes and we'll have a set at the nets."

Next day, he went to town to see his solicitors—so he said. She knew that he was going to see Lord Markton, but not a word passed her lips. "I may be away a couple of days, Zelia," he said gently, "and I want you to do something for

me—something I wouldn't let anyone else do." He took her to the study and showed her the rough notes that he wished her to collate. "This book," he said, with a little pride, "is going to be the standard work on Insurance."

He returned to Brewster House earlier than he expected—midnight. A new



Quick as an antelope . . . she sprang at Ross, wrenched the revolver from his weak hand and flung it away into the flower-beds,"

Zelia, or, rather the old Zelia whom Society had known before her marriage, was awaiting him. Brewster House was rocking with levity. Half-a-dozen guests, and doubtful guests, were showing their appreciation of Zelia as a hostess. The wine was flowing, jests were being bandied across the table, a vulgar little woman with flaxen hair was stabbing at

the keys of a piano which had been hauled into the dining-room, and a lanky, brainless youth was whining through the chorus of a music-hall song. Zelia sprang up as Pluen opened the door, horror in every line of his face; the fat, perspiring old man with the corrugated chin, or layers of chin, who was sitting on her left, mumbled, sleepily: "When the cat's—cat's away . . ." The other guests stammered in their chairs, and looked to Zelia. Her face was flushed as she went towards Pluen. She was laughing, or trying to laugh. She walked unsteadily, and felt instinctively for the back of a chair as she neared him.

"Back early, dear—aren't you?" she said, with a foolish giggle.

He didn't speak; all the breath had gone out of him.

"My friends—" She waved her hand by way of introduction. "Pals. Pals of the dear dead days."

The flaxen-haired woman cried out: "Good old Zelia. Once a pal, always a pal."

Zelia paid no attention. She was still regarding Pluen with heavy eyes.

"Couldn't stick the quiet, dear," she said, coarsely. "So I wired to the crowd and—here they are. . . . Look at the 'Duke'"—she turned and pointed at the fat man with the chins. "He's an old dear, but he does lift that elbow of his. . . . What are you staring at me like that for, Pluen? Since all your friends have given us a miss, why not have a good time with—with us?" She reached for a glass of wine and held it above her head. "Drink, Pluen, to the friends that count. Let's be—let's be devils." And she raised her voice in shrill laughter, the others taking their cue from her.

Pluen's strength, mental strength, returned. He smashed the glass out of her hand, caught her round the waist as she was falling, and carried her bodily up the stairs to her room. There, he placed her on a couch, then locked the door upon her, placing the key in his pocket. He ran down the stairs, tore open the dining-room door, and surveyed the crowd.

"Mrs. Pluen is unwell," he said, making a brave effort to keep his voice steady. "I will thank you to leave—at once."

It sobered them, frightened them. Within a quarter-of-an-hour the last guest

had left; then, with white face and quivering lips, Pluen went slowly up the stairs.

And it was the old Zelia—*his* Zelia—that he found in the locked room. He closed the door and looked at her in amazement. She faced him, her head held proudly, her eyes full of a fire that heightened their wondrous beauty. She had finished with make-believe; the feigned vulgarity of a short while before was gone.

"Your friends have gone, Zelia."

"My friends!"

". . . . Zelia! You were pretending, just now? You—"

"You sent them away?"

"Yes. Ordered them from the house."

"Why don't you order me out too?"

"Don't talk like that, Zelia. Your nerves have gone to pieces."

"They never were stronger. . . . Society will make you order me out when they hear the news."

"News?"

"That Mrs. Pluen entertained her old friends at Brewster House in her husband's absence. I have arranged for the publication of the choice bit of gossip."

"Zelia! You haven't been so mad?"

"The paper will be published at the end of the week. . . . I want to be ordered out of the house. And if you don't order me out, I shall walk out."

"Zelia! Your mind has given way."

"It hasn't. But it will give way if the torture doesn't cease." She forced back the sobs.

"Torture, Zelia!" The pain he was suffering showed itself in the half-closed eyelids. "God knows, I've tried to show you how much I love you."

"No, no, Torrington, you do not love me. You are still in love with—with yourself."

"My dear Zelia, I've given up—"

"Everything. I know. And I haven't spoken a word of gratitude. Why? Because there was nothing to be grateful for. Look at me, Torrington . . . now!" she gripped him by the shoulders and compelled him to look into her eyes. "Dare you say to me, now—on your honour—before God—dare you say, 'Zelia, I do not believe that you shot Tony Ross'? Dare you?"

"Heaven defend me—didn't I say as much in court?"

"Court! Bah! This room is more sacred than a public court."

"In everything that I've said and done since that night——"

"I know—I know. You gave up your Society friends for me, you gave up your ambitions, you flung away your political chances. Why? For me, Torrington?"

"Who else?"

"You gave up all these not because you believed me to be innocent but because you feared the 'I told you so' of your friends. If you had thrown me down it would have been a confession by you that you had made a mistake in marrying me; they would have pitied you. You are not the kind of man to relish pity. Innocent or guilty, you determined to stand by me so that you might prove to Society that you were broader-minded than they. That's all. What have you saved me from? The law was satisfied of my innocence. Listen, Torrington, every time you gave up something for me—ambitions, friends, chances, you placed a new weapon in the hands of my traducers. Can't you hear them? 'Poor Pluen! Sacrificed himself. She's dragged him down.' That's why I want to go away. I want you to make no more sacrifices. Society will forgive you the past. For the man, there is always a back door into the good graces of Society."

"Zelia!"

She had suddenly broken down. Her poor body rocked with sobs. He snatched her to him, winding his arms around her shoulders.

"Zelia, woman, I love you more than ever." He kissed her wet face, her hair, even her hands. "I do believe that you were innocent of Ross's death; but even if it had been otherwise, if the law had blundered and decided against you, it would not have made any difference to my love. We were happy—wonderfully happy before this thing happened; we are going to win back those happy days. . . . Hush. Don't insist on this mad caprice of yours. I'm going to show you how deeply I love you, and how lightly I can fling away that 'friendship' to which you referred, and those ambitions.

"You didn't believe me when I said that I was going to town to see the solicitors. You thought I was going to see Markton. There! I can read your mind as easily as you appear to read mine. True I saw Markton, but not on political matters. I was with the solici-

tors nearly the whole of the day. Why? Because I could see that you were breaking your heart in this prison. I realized that I was selfish: here in this house, I could find sufficient in my books to interest me, to keep my mind away from—from other matters, but not so you. Brewster House is to be advertised for sale to-morrow, and it will sell readily."

"Torry!"

"A moment, my darling. It is to be sold, and you and I are leaving the country. We're going to Florida—orange growing. We are going to cast off Society as we would cast off old garments. Love you? So much so that I'm going to forget that my name was ever Pluen. . . . Zelia, supposing—supposing we have a little late supper, here, in this room. . . . Hus-sh!" And he stole quietly to the bell.

* * * * *

Down in Florida these two began a new life as "Mr. and Mrs. Babbington." Zelia taught him the meaning of love; he showed her the depths of his own great heart. Two years in the sunshine, in the groves with their dressings of green and gold, made them younger.

Aviation was in its infancy. An aviator, one Henri Plaquet, came down the coast to give a demonstration. Torrington and Zelia drove out in their buggy to witness it. They were the only English people there, and after the flights Plaquet was introduced to Torrington. Zelia said to him, with a little, childish laugh that struck her husband as being peculiar and reminiscent: "It is a wonderful invention, M'sieur, but I confess that it awakens a sense of regret."

Plaquet held out his hands, expressively.

"Regret, Madame. How so?"

She looked furtively at Torrington before replying:

"The air being conquered, there will be no more sanctuary for those who might wish to—hide in waste spaces."

And Torrington knew what was in her mind. He patted her playfully on the cheek, and before they left the grounds they had extended an invitation to the aviator to dine with them.

It was a delightful evening. After dinner, Zelia played and sang; Plaquet, with native gallantry, turned over the music, and it was while at the piano that

the Incredible happened. The music had ceased. Plaquet remained standing near the piano—he was staring at a photograph on the top of the instrument—a photograph of Brewster House. A flicker of sentiment had prompted Torrington to bring it away.

Plaquet's face began to expand with a smile of recognition. He turned to Torrington:

"It ees not your house—no?"

"No," said Torrington, quickly, and flashed a warning to Zelia. "I picked it up somewhere—admired the architecture."

Plaquet's head was nodding.

"I can say you where it ees . . . Kent."

"Really," said Torrington, faintly. "I'm afraid that Kent is so far away that—"

"*Comment!*" Plaquet clapped his hands. "It ees in Kent, near ze coast. I know—I know—I know. Those turrets, funny leetle turrets all round. And ze vista. I remember. Ze vista like a—like a tunnel to ze sea. Trees each side—all ze way, then . . . zut! And you fall off into ze sea. So funny. Listen, Madame, I tell you a story—"

"There are some interesting pictures of old English houses in my study," said Torrington, weakly.

Plaquet stepped away from the piano and addressed Zelia:

"Madame, zees afternoon, you say me, eet ees dangerous—I'aviation. I say you 'No,' and you laugh because you think me . . . poof! you know what I mean. Now, I say you I have been frightened—once. In my monoplane? No. My friend in England, he was a good aeronaut. The balloon, you know. It was my birthday, and to me he say, 'We will fly back to Paris.' That was in Kent, north Kent. That day my friend speak funny, but I was too young, too brave, to notice much. And so we ascend, in ze evening, and ze wind blow ver' hard. He say me, 'Henri, we soon reach Paris in zees wind. Eh?' And I laugh and say, 'Yes,' but I could not make him understand that we fly ver' low—too low. Sometimes, I feel the trees will catch us as we skim over them. I say to him, 'Higher!' And he laugh at me, and show his teeth. 'No ballast,' he say, and fling off his coat. I fling things over, but we are still flying low.

Dark! Ver' dark, but I have scen zees house, here, ze trees, ze vista and beyond, ze sea. I know—I know. Madame, there ees one moment in life when your brain takes a picture as no camera could take it. That house with the turrets, ze funny turrets, ees here in my brain. . . . My friend is mad. I see his eyes all red. 'No ballast,' he cries. 'Jump.' *Oui!* He ask me to jump. We fight. We are near the house. He is strong and I am forced over the side of ze car. I hold to a side rope. He is shouting, now. 'Le' go! Le' go.' And then—then, as I look up in his face, he fires with a pistol. . . . He has missed. . . . We are over ze sea. The car splashes in ze water. He is drowned. I swim—swim, many, many hours. A fishing boat and I am safe. Madame, yes, I have been afraid."

Torrington was the first to break the long silence that followed.

"How long ago, M'sieur?"—and there was no eagerness in the voice—just the casual tone of a slightly interested listener.

Plaquet said slowly: "It will be three years in March."

"March!" This from Zelia.

"*Oui*, Madame—March the ninth."

Torrington wet his lips with his tongue.

"March the ninth," he said, and he was breathing in a laboured way. "You are very exact in your dates."

"My birthday, M'sieur!"

Zelia went over to the piano.

"I will help you to forget, M'sieur Plaquet," she said, but she wanted to play to hide her eyes from Torrington.

And, after Plaquet had left them, those two remained in silence, until Zelia crept across to Torrington, and whispered:

"No, my darling. Society wouldn't believe it, even—even if it were true: And—and I don't want Society. . . . Torr, darling, say—say that—that you believe it was true! Say you believe that you know, now, how Tony Ross was shot—through the crown."

Torrington held her to him. He couldn't speak; he daren't. He knew that Society would not credit the story of how Ross was struck by a bullet fired from a drifting balloon. And—and Zelia was right: neither of them wanted Society.

They stayed in the orange groves.

A little novel of stage life
(complete)

The Emergency Man



By
Albert Payson
Terhune

singers, while herded in the wings at either side, like so many sheep, and with stern instructions to stay where they were, massed the horde of men and women who made up the chorus, *corps de ballet* and supernumerary force.

Thus it was that Hugh Spurgeon, in the garb of a mediæval Italian peasant, and Claire Braith, clad as a *contadina*, chanced to be standing side by side under the canvas eaves of a stone cottage. They had an instinctive way of gravitating towards each other, these two, in such moments of waiting. During the past month of six performances a week their friendship had insensibly grown closer and more and more needful to them both. It had begun the day when, despite his American successes, Spurgeon, having failed finally in securing an English contract, was about to enrol as a Tube guard to get a living wage and she induced him to try for an opening in the chorus.

"What's the delay?" asked Spurgeon now. "I don't know," she whispered back, "but whatever it is, Gennaro will bring on a fit if he isn't careful. He's been raging back and forth from stage to stage door ever since we came out."

"Perhaps some of the principals are late. He always hates that."

THE great, dim bulk of the auditorium of the Opera House was in gloom. A gloom redolent of dust, of the ghost of dead perfume, of an occasional tobacco reek that drifted in from the lobby.

It was now 11 A.M., and, incidentally, it was the hour fixed for the dress rehearsal of a new opera.

In the orchestra pit sat the full "Italian Opera" quota of eighty-five musicians—nearly a half-hundred less than for one of the noisier Wagnerian works, but still enough to seem like a small army in the front of that empty auditorium.

On the stage lounged four or five lesser

"No, I think not. Those that aren't on the stage or in the wings must be in their dressing-rooms waiting the call. Otherwise Gennaro would be sending everybody in sight for them or storming at their dressing-room doors. But it must be serious. I've never seen him so worried."

As a matter of fact, the impresario, Gennaro—whose name, by the way, was the sole Italian thing about him—was in a state bordering on apoplexy. Grifi, the conductor—a genuine son of Italy—was in little better case.

The press agent, Kenneth Rogers, was gloomily trotting up and down the aisle.

Even without this mysterious new cause for worry, the occasion of this particular rehearsal was one for anxiety. For it marked not only a new production but a new singer as well.

Gennaro had sought for a novelty to spur flagging zeal among his patrons. With this in view he had sent post-haste to Bulgaria and had lured from that war-glorified little principality a Bulgar tenor who had recently set Eastern Europe ablaze with his wondrous golden voice. This tenor, Gorsky by name, had been loudly and expensively heralded in the press as a second Caruso. Rogers, the press agent, had performed prodigies of misdirected genius in his behalf. And as a result London was actually awaiting with some interest the first appearance of the new "find."

A week earlier Gorsky had landed. In appearance he was tall, of good build, smooth of face, and dressed in perhaps the worst-fitting clothes west of the Balkan Peninsula. Though he spoke no word of English, he, through the kind interpreting of Kenneth Rogers (who spoke no word of any other language) supplied the reporters with glowing opinions of London and of English women, and had told with a charming lack of false modesty how wild all the sovereigns of Eastern Europe were over his singing.

Then he had descended upon the Opera House, and trouble had forthwith set in. In villainously bad French Gorsky had proceeded to make life a horror to everyone in general and to Gennaro in particular.

First and foremost he had insisted on making his debut as Carlo in Verdi's *Luisa Miller*. In *Luisa Miller*, he said, he had scored his first European success, and he would sing it first in England or, contract or no contract, he would not sing here at all.

Not a singer in all Gennaro's company was really familiar with any rôle of *Luisa Miller*, and most of them had never even heard it. The orchestra had never played its music, nor did Grifi, the conductor, know it. It was even difficult to purchase scores for a work so seldom sung.

Perhaps the only person who had derived any amusement out of the annoying situation was Hugh Spurgeon. "It is pie to me," he had laughed as he and Claire had walked home to their boarding-house after the first rehearsal. "Old Baldassarre, my singing teacher

in Milan, was daft over *Luisa Miller*, and he was furious that it's so seldom sung nowadays. He says Carlo is one of the best lyric tenor rôles in all Opera, and it was one of the first rôles he taught me. I could sing it backwards."

To add to the general upset, Gorsky had kept the stage director frantic by insisting on supervising every rehearsal. He had saved his throat by singing only in the *mezza voce*, but from what the others could glean from this he was evidently possessed of an unusually sweet and strong voice.

But as everything in this world has an end, even the trying period of preparation drew to a close, and the first performance had been scheduled for the evening of the day whereon this unforeseen and annoying delay occurred.

The dress rehearsal should, of course, have occurred on the preceding afternoon. But Knesch, Gorsky's dresser and factotum, had brought Gennaro word that the tenor was indisposed and that he wanted the rehearsal postponed until the following morning at eleven. Reluctantly Gennaro had obeyed, though great was the discontent of every other member of the cast.

Gennaro, in deep converse with Kenneth Rogers, halted within earshot of the group of waiting peasants, and within a yard of Spurgeon.

"I've stood almost as much of this as I'm going to," the impresario was saying, exasperation making him careless as to who might hear. "I'm used to prima donnas having hysterics when I ask them to fulfil their contracts, but Gorsky has been more bother than all the prima donnas, and, by thunder, this absence of his is the last straw."

"But," protested Rogers, "his dresser telephoned me not five minutes ago that Gorsky will surely show up for the evening performance."

"Heaven help us if he doesn't!" groaned Gennaro. "We're sold out."

"Yes," smiled Rogers complacently, "I fancy I haven't done so badly in waking up the public to him."

"But what good will all that do if he throws us down?" almost screamed Gennaro. "It'll be a boomerang. We were sold out for Dragaere. And we got such an edge on public curiosity about her that one could have shaved with it. Then at the last moment she broke her contract and shook us. Then came another fizzle when Sebaste's voice failed on the eve of his *première*. There were whispers of 'fake,' and at once the box-office receipts began to fall off. I tell you, Rogers, I know the English public. They're long-suffering if they think an entertainer is really trying to please them. But once let them get the idea an impresario's trying to fool them and he might as well put up the shutters."

"You think—"

"I know. If Gorsky doesn't show up to-night, after all the booming we've given him, the Opera House project is as good as wrecked."

"Oh, we could announce a postponement." Gennaro threw up his hands. "Never!" he protested. "We announced postponements with Dragaere and Sebaste. No. It's to-night or nothing."

"Don't worry," pleaded Rogers. "The chances are he'll—"

"There's Dick!" broke in Gennaro, as the impresario's son, a panting and perspiring young man, made his appearance from the direction of the stage entrance and elbowed his way towards his father. "I sent him round to Gorsky's hotel with orders to find out what was the matter. Well, lad, what is it?" he broke off eagerly.

"What is it?" disgustedly echoed his son. "It's the very deuce and all. Gorsky won't sing to-night."

"What! Did he say so?"

"He didn't say anything. He can't say anything. He's drunk."

"Drunk? Impossible!"

"And if I'm any judge of such things, he won't be sober enough to sing a note in days. To make it worse, he's caught a cold and can't utter a sound."

Gennaro stared with drooping jaw at the young man, unable to take in the full import of the black tidings. Dick hurried on:

"When I got there, Knesch, that red-faced dresser of his, wouldn't let me in. I pushed past him. Gorsky was lying across his bed in full evening dress. At eleven in the morning! I tried to rouse him, and he woke up enough to whisper some sort of hoarse, incoherent words in his own language, then went to sleep again. I couldn't get anything out of Knesch, so I asked the hotel people. It seems Knesch had had them telephone to a Bulgarian doctor, and the doctor had been to see Gorsky, so I hunted up the doctor. He is a decent enough sort of chap, and told me—"

"Well?" interrupted Rogers impatiently.

"He says he knew Gorsky back in Bulgaria. The man goes on periodical sprees. That's why he isn't more universally famous in Europe. Can't be depended on. He went on one yesterday. The doctor says he won't be on his feet before to-morrow at earliest, and that he's probably taken a cold that will make him as hoarse as a mule. That's all. And it's about enough."

Gennaro looked for an instant longer in stupid amazement at the bearer of ill news, then without a word he started towards his office, head on breast, feet a-drag. Rogers and Dick followed.

Spurgeon was watching with curiosity the questioning looks and funny gestures of those who were going to and fro, trying to learn the facts. Suddenly a tug at the sleeve of his velvet peasant jacket made him turn. Claire Braith, her face white beneath its make-up, her big eyes ablaze with excitement, was looking up at him.

"Mr. Spurgeon!" she panted. "Don't you see what it means? Can't you understand?"

"Of course," he returned, surprised at her

unwonted emotion. "It means Gorsky can't sing. And it means a terrible loss in every way to Gennaro."

"No, no. That isn't what I meant. Can't you see what this means to you?"

"To me?"

"You—you told me you know the rôle of Carlo in *Luisa Miller*. For a month you've been longing vainly for your 'chance.' Can't you see—"

She got no farther. With a gasp, as the audacious idea burst upon him, Hugh Spurgeon broke through the crowd in the wake of the vanished impresario.

II

GENNARO, impresario of the Opera House, slouched into his private office to the left of the foyer and sank into a heap in the nearest chair. For the instant the fire of purpose and the bulldog tenacity that had made him dare break into London's grand opera field had deserted him, and he felt limp and dizzy. Rogers and Dick followed him in, shutting the door behind them and looking down in silence on the miserable figure.

Before either of them could frame a syllable of condolence the door was flung open again and slammed shut. Advancing into the room came a rather tall, determined-looking man clad as the revelling Italian peasant is clad—on the stage and nowhere else. All three turned to look on the unannounced intruder. At sight of his costume they unanimously scowled. This most assuredly was no moment for a disgruntled chorus man to come forward with a grievance or a request for an advance.

"Get out of here!" stormed Kenneth Rogers, his professional geniality all at once wearing thin.

"Just as the chief says," answered Spurgeon pleasantly. "But if I go I take his luck with me. It would be as sensible to order a fireman out of a blazing house."

"What do you want?" snapped Dick. "Can't you see my father is—"

"I can see your father is in pretty dire need of me. That's why I'm here."

"He's drunk," moaned Gennaro. "Get rid—"

"No," gently corrected Spurgeon. "It's Gorsky who is drunk. That's why I'm here."

"Will you get out?" roared Kenneth Rogers.

"No. Is that quite plain? I—"

"You're fired!" exploded Dick. "Go and—"

"Very good. That's settled. Now, then, Mr. Gennaro, I'm here as the tenor who can get you out of the hole you're in."

"Don't bother me. Get out! I—"

"I can sing the rôle of Carlo in *Luisa Miller*, and I'm probably the only tenor in England just now that can. Not only can I sing it, but I can sing it acceptably."

"What do I care what you can sing and what you can't?" snarled Gennaro, rousing

from his daze. "And if you or anyone else mentions the name of that opera in my presence again——"

"Gorsky is billed to sing to-night," went on Spurgeon patiently. "The house is sold out. There's a line out there in the foyer now. You struggling to get seats at any price. You yourself say you are done if Gorsky doesn't come up to time. Well, he *will*."

"What's that?"

"I say your audience needn't be disappointed. Gorsky will sing—as far as they are concerned."

"Oh, you are crazy! What are you driving at?"

"No. I can sing Carlo. I can sing it well. No one in England knows Gorsky or Gorsky's voice. He plays the part in a beard and with a 'weather tan' make-up. No one who had caught a glimpse of him merely in street clothes and clean shaven would recognize him as Carlo. He and I are about the same size and build, so I propose that I impersonate him for you to-night. No one will be the wiser and your credit for keeping faith with the public will be saved. Before another performance he'll probably be all right again. There's my plan. Take it or leave it. Now fire away with your objections."

Uninvited, Spurgeon helped himself to the only vacant chair, crossed his velvet-encased legs and leaned back. The three others stared from him to each other. Kenneth Rogers broke the pause of amazement with a mirthless chuckle.

"The—the idea is preposterous," Gennaro stammered at last.

"Thanks!" answered Spurgeon, drawing a sigh of relief. "I knew you'd consent if only you'd give yourself time to think it over."

"Every goose-neck chorus tenor thinks he's another Caruso," grumbled Gennaro. "The chances are that you'd be laughed off the stage."

"The rehearsal hasn't been dismissed. Let me go through Carlo's music with the company."

The impresario turned to his son. "Dick," he said, "ask Grifi to come here. And—and—give orders that the rehearsal is not to be dismissed yet."

As Dick departed, marvelling, upon his mission, Gennaro wheeled about on Spurgeon.

"What's your name?" he demanded.

"Hugh Spurgeon."

"Member of my chorus, from your clothes. What's your experience?"

"Church choir work till I was twenty-five. Then four years' study in Italy and France under Baldassarre and Duchesne. I sang at——"

"H'm! Then what are you doing in the chorus here?"

"Waiting for my 'chance.' And I'm going to make good," smiled Spurgeon, as Dick bustled in with Grifi, the musical conductor.

"Grifi," said Gennaro, half-sheepishly, "here's a chap who thinks he can jump into

the rôle of Carlo to-night and make the public think he is Gorsky. If you——"

"I did not come here to hear a foolish joke," snapped the conductor. "It is a very bad season for jest when we are all so——"

"If it's a joke it's on me," said Gennaro. "I'm tempted to play a hundred-to-one shot, the more especially as I shall lose the race anyway if I don't play it."

He drew the conductor aside and they conversed together in whispers for a few minutes. At the end of that time Grifi, with a shrug of his narrow, expressive shoulders, crossed to the piano, sat down before its keyboard and struck a masterful chord or two.

Spurgeon rose eagerly. He recognized the chords. They were the prelude of the famous second act aria from *Luisa Miller*. His chance had indeed come. On that aria would hang Gorsky's success or failure. It was to *Luisa Miller* what the "Di Quella Pira" is to *Trovatore*, or "La Donna e Mobile" to *Rigoletto*, or the "Mad Song" or "Sextette" to *Lucia*. Now that the crucial moment had arrived, all the blood in Spurgeon's body surged to his head. It pounded against his temples. It choked him.

It was for this moment he had toiled and suffered and waited all his life. And he felt as might a miser who stakes the hoarded savings of a lifetime on the turn of a single card. Drawing himself up, he began, in Italian, the florid aria:

"The altar or the tomb prepare!
Whichever it be I do not care.
To bitter fate——"

He got no farther. Grifi brought down his fist with a thump upon the keyboard. Gennaro groaned aloud. Kenneth Rogers chuckled.

"Stop!" ordered the conductor. "You are frightened. You are squeezing your voice through tight throat-walls and from the top point of your lungs. It sounds horrible."

A second and louder chuckle from Rogers sent a wave of warm anger splashing through Hugh Spurgeon, tingling his nerves; relaxing his taut muscles, filling him with the lust of battle.

"Once more!" Spurgeon commanded sharply.

And the conductor, unused to such a tone from a chorus man, laughed as might a man who has been growled at by a furry Angora kitten. Again he ran through the prelude, and Spurgeon, thinking far less of what he was singing than of the pleasure he would have taken in punching Rogers's grinning face, sang the aria, unchecked, from first note to last. Subconsciously he made use of the shades of phrasing and every other device so carefully drilled into him by his old Milanese maestro. And with his conscious mind he was wishing all the time that he could find a good excuse to thrash Rogers.

As the aria's last notes died Grifi and Gennaro exchanged a quick look.

"My friend," said the conductor, addressing

Spurgeon in a tone far different from his earlier brusque manner, "what odd buffet of fate hurled you into the chorus? You are an artist. Not perhaps of the very highest—yet; but your voice is God-given. And someone has taught you to use it."

"Mr. Spurgeon," said the impresario grudgingly, "I'll give you a chance. Come to the stage, and we will begin the rehearsal at once."

"We can apologize to the audience for 'Gorsky's' voice being below par," suggested Rogers cheerily, "and beg the public's indulgence with his slight cold. That always puts people in a good humour."

"It's put me in a fine one," remarked Spurgeon. "Signor Gennaro, I have but one favour to ask at present. To-night, when I sing, please place this objectionable person in the wings somewhere where I can see and hear him. And let him chuckle at intervals. It will keep my mind off the fear of breaking down."

Leaving Rogers wondering bewilderedly as to the point of the joke, Hugh Spurgeon led the way back to the stage.

"It's my chance," he kept saying to himself. "My only chance. And—and it was *she* who opened my eyes to it. I must win, if only because she thinks I can."

III

HUGH SPURGEON sat in a dressing-room, in front of a slightly flawed mirror, "making up" for his debut as "Gorsky" and, incidentally, as *Luisa Miller's* Carlo. His was not the big "star" dressing-room off the "left first" entrance of the stage—the dressing-room reserved for the great Gorsky. To-night that dressing-room lay deserted, partly because there was no man entitled to its use, and chiefly because Gorsky had locked it two days earlier, and had walked off with the key.

Spurgeon had been relegated to one of the dressing-rooms just under the stage. It was small, but even so it was an infinite improvement over the huge draughty loft which he had hitherto shared with fifty other men, and he was well content.

The door opened and Gennaro stamped in. Sitting on a stool in the corner, the impresario lighted a cigar (being above the local law and thus the only man who dared defy the strict "No Smoking" order behind the scenes), and glanced critically at Spurgeon's make-up.

A photograph of Gorsky as Carlo was propped on the table before Hugh. And as best he could he was copying his details.

"Good," commented Gennaro, as he noted the change already made in Spurgeon's aspect. "You don't look as Gorsky looks off the stage, but in his Carlo make-up he doesn't either. And you look enough like that picture of him as Carlo that the Sunday papers published to fool anyone from the front. I'm enforcing the rule to-night against letting even the most favoured music critic come 'back,' and I've

got old Ballard at the entrance to turn anyone off, so you won't be seen at close quarters. And as I've preached the fear of sudden beheading to everyone, from chorus to soprano, to keep their mouths shut, if the story does get out it will be unconfirmed and no one will believe it. It'll pass as a press agent yarn to boom Gorsky."

Spurgeon put the wig over his close-cropped hair and proceeded to adjust it, bending towards the mirror.

"By the way," went on Gennaro nervously, "no chance of your getting stage fright and wrecking us all, is there?"

"No," was Spurgeon's quiet response.

"Confident, ah? That's right. But don't be too much so. Over-confidence is as bad as cold feet. Just because you went through the rehearsal smoothly to-day, don't think you won't have to be on guard to-night. It's one thing to go through a part to a dark, empty house, but it's quite another to sing the same part with people watching you and every critic crouching ready to jump on your first break."

"I know that," said Spurgeon coolly, "but it doesn't apply to me. It's Danilo Gorsky who is on trial to-night, not Hugh Spurgeon. So I'm not worrying. I was nervous to-day. That was because I was on trial before you and Grifi. But I passed that test, and now I've nothing to bother me. It's up to Gorsky to worry, if anyone does. I'm playing his hand, not mine, in this game of bluff. By the way, Signor Gennaro, there's a detail we haven't settled yet. If I fail to-night you're at liberty to kick me out into the snow. But if I succeed—if I get you out of this scrape—what is there in it for me? What future with your company?"

"My dear fellow," gushed the impresario, "I think you can safely leave that to the gratitude of Tony Gennaro. We shan't quarrel over terms, I assure you. I—"

The call for the first act broke in on their talk. Spurgeon, giving a last touch to his beard and wig, caught up his plumed hat and followed the impresario to the wings. The chorus was already grouped on the stage, and the dancers bunched in a right upper entrance. The overture began. Spurgeon made his way to where Claire Braith stood. She looked in open approval at his make-up.

"I'd never recognize you!" she exclaimed. "Tell me, are you scared?"

"Why," he laughed, "oddly enough, I'm not. As I just told Gennaro, it's Gorsky, and not I, who is on trial. It's a lark for me."

"It's something much, much more than that," she contradicted, "it's your chance."

"If it is, I owe it to you," he rejoined. "There's no man who isn't under a burden of debt to some woman, and from the very first I've been your debtor for—"

"For nothing," she laughed in embarrassment. "It was your voice, not you, that I tried to bring before the world. And for the world's sake. Not for yours."

"You mean," he reproached, "that you'd have done the same thing for any man? Please say you wouldn't. Please say it."

But she only laughed at him in pretty perverseness and would not speak.

"Claire!" he whispered, something throbbing suddenly in his throat, "if I make good to-night—"

"You're going to make good," she corrected. "I thought that was settled."

"If I make good to-night," he went on, unheeding, "I'll be something more than a cheap chorus man with no prospects. I'll be—"

"Oh, dear!" she sighed in mock despair, "you're actually bragging. And so soon!"

"I'm not," he denied, "and you know I'm not. I only mean that I'll have a right then to say things I've no right to say now. To say—"

The concerted voices of sixty people broke in on his words. The curtain was up. The chorus of villagers assembled on the village green before old Miller's cottage to celebrate Luisa's birthday were giving voice right tunefully. Then, at the beat of the music, the dancers trooped in, Claire with them.

From the wings Spurgeon watched the dainty, graceful movements of the girl he had learned to love so absorbingly. And to him just then success spelled only the right to ask her to share his fortune. He felt he had no such right yet, on his precarious salary as a chorus man and without any actual hope of betterment, but should he succeed—well, he must—he would! Meanwhile he was half glad the music cue had broken in on his impulsive declaration.

Luisa, a plump, middle-aged lady in a violent yellow wig, tripped on to the stage from the doorway of her cottage to receive the compliments of her chorus admirers on having weathered eighteen summers. Her entrance aria over, it was Carlo's cue to come on the stage.

Spurgeon, still with that utter lack of nervousness and with a curiously impersonal sense of aloofness from his rôle, ran forward from the wings to clasp the portly prima donna to his heart. As he came upon the stage the house broke into a salvo of loud, ready-made applause—a tribute of welcome to the foreigner whom it was prepared to like. The action of the opera was momentarily checked. Griff's orchestra "vamped" while Spurgeon bowed his bewigged head again and again in smiling recognition of London's greeting.

Then began Carlo's duet with Luisa. His heart still full of the recent interrupted scene between Claire and himself, Spurgeon sang at his best, his whole soul going into the florid love phrases. There was a faint rustle from the audience as people settled lower in their seats and glanced at one another in pleased endorsement of the new-comer. He was assuredly a "find." Gennaro had scored again. This was not a press-agent built tenor, but

one who sang with passion and rare feeling, and with a voice whose beauty and strength were unquestionable. An artist. Wherefore London prepared to take him to its hospitable arms. Even the critics nodded solemn approval.

The first act sang itself to a tuneful end. And there were a goodly number of curtain calls, swelling to a crescendo when Spurgeon appeared alone before the curtain. Gennaro almost fell on the tenor's neck as Spurgeon hurried to his dressing-room to change his costume.

"Good man! Good man!" applauded the impresario. "I'm proud of you! Proud! But don't forget the big test comes in the second act. The 'Altar or Tomb' aria is the crux of the whole thing. They'll be on the look out for that. Save yourself for it. For on that aria you'll stand or fall, so far as London goes."

"I?" laughed Spurgeon. "You mean Gorsky."

A silent, rapturously congratulatory pressure of the hand from Claire as she passed with the dancers trooping to their dressing-room meant more to Spurgeon than all the impresario's ecstasies. Into the dressing-room he went. In a very few minutes his hunting costume was changed for the violet velvet suit he was to wear in Count Walter's ancestral hall. Then, picking up an atomizer containing a mild spray prescribed for him years before by Baldassarre, he sprayed his throat carefully, as was his custom after each act.

This done, he made his way back to the wings. There he saw the stage was already set for his scene in Count Walter's hall. An atmosphere of relief and even of gaiety pervaded the whole "world behind the scenes," in striking contrast to the nervous gloom that had preceded the first act. Several of the principals, who had hitherto ignored Spurgeon, came up and congratulated him effusively, which further, and perhaps more than the enthusiastic welcome from the audience, added to his delight and confidence. This was a triumph of which he had for years dreamed—the loud applause of a crowded house, the delighted approbation of a great manager, the compliments of other artists. A month ago he would have given ten years of his life for such a moment. Yet now, somewhat to his surprise, all he saw or cared for was the light of proud happiness in the eyes of one little girl.

The curtain went up on a long *récitatif* dialogue between Count Walter and the villainous Wurm; then came the Duchess's song; and, at last, Carlo himself entered. If possible, Spurgeon was even more master of himself and of the situation than during the first act. The training of old Baldassarre was standing him in good stead.

And now approached the moment for his great aria. He braced himself, with a glow of assured victory, for it. He was alone on the stage, where he had been left roaming in

récitatif despair at the news that Luisa was faithless and that he must wed the Duchess. In dramatic fervour he began to sing his woes in very excellent Italian:

a man was dashing. And by the single electric light in the passage Spurgeon recognized him at first glance.

It was Gorsky!

"The altar or the tomb prepare!
Whiche'er it be I do not care.
To bitter fate my heart I bare,
Since naught is left me but despair.
Since she, so faithless, could deceive,
In heav'n's own truth I scarce believe.
I turn to——"

He had been aware of a strange commotion at the left first entrance to the stage even while he was singing the earlier bars of the aria. Now, turning his grief-stricken face ever so little to one side, and taking a step backward, he was able to see into this entrance. Hitherto Gennaro and Count Walter had been the only persons standing there, the former to hear the aria to best advantage and the latter awaiting his entrance cue.

Now, down that short, straight passageway from the star dressing-room towards the stage



The fall and
Hugh's ex-
clamation
brought a
dozen people
to the stairway



Gorsky, dressed and made up for the rôle of Carlo; Gorsky reeling drunkenly in his shambling run; Gorsky, whose befuddled mind was very evidently intent on the feat of rushing incontinently upon the stage and snatching his favourite rôle from the interloper.

Truly here was an "operatic novelty" with a vengeance!

IV

AWAKENING in the early evening from the first deadening effects of his potations, Gorsky had hazily recalled that this was the night of his London *début*. Ordering the slavishly devoted Knesch to accompany him, he had driven straight to the Opera House, arriving there during the progress of the first act. Admitted by the doorkeeper, who recognized him, he had gone straight—and, as it chanced, wholly unobserved—to his locked dressing-room, and, under Knesch's ministrations, had proceeded to dress for the rôle of Carlo.

Then, his drunken whim still driving him, he had made his way towards the stage, and had nearly reached it when Gennaro had caught sight of him. With a gasp of horror the impresario made a frantic clutch at the Bulgar tenor. Gorsky eluded the grasp by ducking, but the sudden motion and the sharp brush of Gennaro's passing outflung arm sent hat and wig flying from Gorsky's head like those of the immortal John Gilpin.

Gorsky, hearing the familiar music of the aria, lurched forward to pick up the fallen headgear. But the feat of balancing was too much for him. Lurching against the wall, and nimbly dodging a second clutch from Gennaro's too tardy fingers, he caught a glimpse of the waiting baritone who sang Count Walter. With drunken inspiration Gorsky repaired his loss of head covering by snatching the long flaxen wig from the dumb-founded baritone's head, clapping it on his own poll and lurching forward on to the stage. The whole episode had consumed scarcely five seconds. Thus, in the very middle of Spurgeon's great aria, a new and altogether amazing figure burst upon the view of the enraptured audience. A man, clad in ruby velvet, reeled dizzily out into the centre of Count Walter's ancestral hall, almost into the very arms of Spurgeon.

The new-comer presented a truly marvellous aspect. Above the flame-hued mediæval costume rose a convulsively twitching and artificially bronzed visage. The lower half of the face was concealed in a long, pointed black beard which was now twisted sharply awry. The head was crowned by a heavy wig several sizes too large, that was thrust down nearly to the eyes, and that formed a wondrous contrast to the inky and twisted beard.

A panting murmur rose from the audience at the advent of this apparition. These were the folk who had laughed uproariously when a black cat had strolled on to the Metropolitan

stage during the "Brüderschaft" scene in *Götterdämmerung*, and when at the same house a charwoman with pail and mop had inadvertently walked out on to the stage during the second act of *Die Walküre*.

But the present sight was beyond laughter. Wherefore an indescribable gabbling, gasping noise arose from the close-packed multitude, a sound of stark, wordless astonishment.

Gorsky leered dazedly out over the rising tiers of pinky-white faces and shoulders and the rows of slab-like shirt fronts. Then he scowled down at Grifi. For the conductor had dropped his baton from sheer bewilderment and shock, and was staring dumbly, while the orchestra, lacking his inspiring direction, had trailed off, through a discordant medley of lessening sound, into silence.

At the dropping of Grifi's baton Spurgeon had promptly ceased singing and, the most collected man present, stood calmly awaiting the expected ringing down of the curtain. He could not imagine any other move under the circumstances.

But the curtain did not come down, for the order to lower it was not given. Both Gennaro and the stage director—in the foremost rank of the crowd of men that by this time crowded every entrance—were too engrossed and too distracted to give the signal.

Gorsky (tremendously at home before the footlights, and evidently still obsessed by the idea that he was there to sing his celebrated aria whose strains he had heard as he left the dressing-room) raised his voice without waiting for the orchestra. Perhaps in his muddled state of mind he had already forgotten that the orchestra was no longer playing.

Drink and his cold had momentarily turned his much heralded voice into a deplorably unmelodious croak, and though he twice, loudly and hoarsely, essayed this first measure of the aria, it was a complete and deplorable failure. Even Gorsky himself, drunk as he was, grasped that, and lapsed into a pitiful, choking sobbing. Then throughout the audience the hush of incredulous wonder gave way to a gale of hysterical laughter.

Hugh Spurgeon realized at length that, for some reason unknown to him, the curtain was not coming down. So, as Gorsky ended the second of his two abortive efforts to sing, Hugh stepped forward to the gesticulating, grimacing foreigner's side, caught him by the shoulder with an outward gentleness that had beneath it all the quiet strength of his body, and swiftly conducted the weakly struggling Gorsky to the first left entrance.

There a half-dozen hands seized the drunkard and hustled him away. Returning to the stage's centre as coolly as though the affair of ejecting a harlequin nondescript were an everyday matter, Spurgeon bowed in smiling apology to the still hysterical audience, and nodded with authority to Grifi.

The conductor took the hint. Waving his recovered baton, he started his suddenly re-organized orchestra upon the prelude of the

aria, and once more, to a hushed house, Spurgeon began his song.

To a crescendo climax he sang it; his high note sounding clear as a bell, long sustained, vibrant, beautiful. And as the last note died a salvo of spontaneous, almost fierce, applause burst from the whole house.

"It is Gorsky that is scoring, not I," muttered Spurgeon to himself.

And he was wrong, too, in ascribing the credit to the name he was supposed to bear. A generous proportion of the plaudits were less for the finely rendered aria than for the splendid pluck and self-control of a man who could be thus hideously interrupted, could run the mysterious intruder off the stage, and could then come back and sing as though nothing had happened. It spoke of nerve, the sort of nerve London loves to honour.

The uproar would not die. Finally Grifi raised his baton, a dead stillness all at once enveloped the house, and Spurgeon was forced to repeat his triumph by an encore.

The opera went on. At the close of the second act, when he ran down to his dressing-room to spray his throat, Spurgeon was joined once more by the excited Gennaro.

"I got rid of him at last," reported the impresario. "Sent him home in a taxi with Dick and the doorkeeper."

"Did he make any trouble?" asked Spurgeon, setting down the atomizer.

"No. Too drunk. But that meek-looking rat-faced little dresser, Knesch, did. He couldn't clearly understand how we dared give the opera in Gorsky's absence. I'm told he's half-witted. He worships Gorsky. He got some sort of idea that you had supplanted his adored master here. And in his broken French the little imbecile rat vowed horrible vengeance upon you. He made such a row I had to kick him out, to keep him from being heard in the audience."

"How are you going to explain Gorsky's sudden appearance on the stage?"

"Oh, Kenneth Rogers is attending to all that. He's telling the reporters a stage hand got drunk and dressed up like that and came out as a practical joke."

"When are you going to arrange about my future with your company?"

"Drop in at my office at ten to-morrow morning. There's the call. Good luck!"

He went away, leaving Spurgeon to follow.

Hugh glanced at himself in the flawed glass, then left the dressing-room. Along a dark little deserted passage he hurried towards the short iron stairway that led up to the wings. As he reached the foot of this stair something from the darkness above sprang down upon him, landing on his shoulders and hanging there like some huge spider.

The shock and weight of the impact sent Spurgeon reeling against the brick wall, and he clutched at its smooth, cold surface to save himself from a nasty fall. At the same instant, while the unseen thing on his shoulders was struggling and clawing at him, Hugh felt

something cold and stinging strike his back with a force that half knocked the breath out of him.

There was something horrible to him in this weird, silent attack by an unseen foe in the gloom of the narrow passageway. He threw up his arms, half in panic, half in battle rage, and endeavoured to seize and grapple with the wriggling creature.

Try as he might, though, he could not get a hold upon it, for it was clinging to his back, and the ornamental cloak he wore hampered his arms. At last, with a sudden motion, throwing all his weight and strength into the act, Spurgeon hurled himself backward against the brick passage-wall, hoping to crush his opponent between the bricks and himself.

The ruse was a success. The thing loosed its hold under that mighty smash, and fell limply to the floor in a huddle of moveless flesh and clothes, and once more Hugh was free.

V

In a moment the fall and Hugh's exclamation had brought a dozen people to the stairway. There the first ray of light revealed Knesch, Gorsky's adoring, half-witted factotum, lying stunned against the foot of the wall. In a dozen words Spurgeon told Gennaro what had befallen, and even as he was speaking a stage hand picked up something from the floor at Knesch's side and handed it silently to Gennaro.

"A knife!" exclaimed the impresario, with a shudder. "And—and with blood on its point, too! Are you badly hurt, Spurgeon?"

"I don't think so," answered Hugh. "I think he only struck once, and that didn't seem to go very deep. I suppose all the crawling and wriggling meant that he was looking for a better chance to stab. He's a sweet little creature to have at large!"

"It's his crazy way of paying you off for supplanting his master. Come back to your dressing-room and let's see how much damage is done. Can you walk all right? Good! Barstow, tell them to hold the curtain. The rest of you get that mangy little Balkan upstairs and send for a constable."

"No," broke in Spurgeon, "that would give away the whole story."

"So it would. Well, pack him off to Gorsky, then, and see he doesn't get in here again. I'll see Gorsky about his case. Lord, but this is a pleasant, uneventful *première* performance!"

They were in Spurgeon's dressing-room a second later, and Gennaro took stock of the tenor's injuries. They consisted of nothing worse than a nasty-looking scratch some three inches long between the shoulder blades, and a bruised elbow where his arm had struck the wall in getting free from Knesch. The thick cloak and the leathern baldric had turned the force of a not over-powerful blow,

and the blow on the elbow had been, at most, a slanting, scraping push rather than a really hard smash.

"Are you able to go on?" queried Gennaro anxiously, the examination at an end.

"Why not?" demanded Spurgeon.

"But your nerves? Aren't they shattered?"

"Signor Gennaro," said Hugh solemnly, "I am still a poor man, with my way to make. I'm neither rich enough nor famous enough to afford the luxury of shattered nerves. I leave those and 'artistic temperament' to people whose success is already won. If you'll drape that cloak for me we won't hold the curtain any longer."

At eleven o'clock next morning Spurgeon, letting himself into his boarding-house, glanced into the sitting-room on his way up to his room. Claire Braith was sitting there, an avalanche of morning newspapers around her.

"Have you read them?" she asked jubilantly.

"But of course you have! Oh, I'm so proud of you! Just listen to this, for instance: 'Bulgar Tenor Scores Heavily at the Opera House'; and this one: 'Triumph Night for Gorsky.' And— Why!" she broke off in quick alarm, "what is it? What has happened?"

"I'm sorry I look so glum as to scare you," he laughed ruefully. "I'm just back from the Opera House. You know Gennaro told me to report at his office at ten."

"To make terms, yes. And you made them?"

"Yes, I made them. For saving the credit of Gennaro and of Gorsky and the popularity of the Opera House, I am to be right dazzlingly rewarded by being allowed to continue as a chorus man."

"No! Oh, no!"

"Yes, that is the gist of it."

"I can't believe it. Tell me—"

"Here's the story in a nutshell—or, rather, in a lemon rind. Gorsky had already been to Gennaro's office before I got there. He must have a constitution of iron to have recovered so quickly from his spree. But it seems he was there by nine o'clock. And he and Gennaro had a long heart-to-heart talk."

"Surely Gennaro discharged him?"

"On the contrary. Gorsky has persuaded him that last night's fiasco was only a temporary mishap and he has promised to drink no more while he is in England. He says his cold is gone and that his voice is as good as ever. Altogether he utterly mollified Gennaro, and between them they settled that there is to be a second performance of *Luisa Miller* to-morrow night. The reviews praised me so highly that Gorsky wants to show London how much better he can sing Carlo. Advertisements of it were sent at once to the papers and all."

"Oh! But—"

"When I got there Gennaro thanked me profusely for helping him out as I did last night. Said he'd never forget it and that he would

surely remember me for the first available opening. But he said also that there's absolutely no opening for the present, and that the only thing for me to do is to go back to the chorus and—to wait!"

"You poor, poor boy! The brute! But surely he is going to give you at least three hundred for last night's performance?"

"When I broached that side of it he hemmed and hawed and at last showed by my contract that I am entitled to get no extra pay for extra performances. And he calls last night's an 'extra performance.' Truly hope is a cable and gratitude a thread. A weak thread at that. I understand now why Gennaro's grown rich so fast. He's a true business man."

"It's horrible! What are you going to do?"

"It's hard to work out a plan of action. You see, I have no precedent to go on. In stories the talented but unknown performer gets his chance and makes gloriously good. And then, after that, all is plain sailing for him. I never read a story that turned out just this way."

"How can you joke about it at such a time?"

"Surely it's better than whining. And I know what I'm going to do: I'm going to stick! I'm going to keep on as a chorus man. And, in spite of them all, soon or late I'll make my success."

"How plucky of you!"

"It isn't. It's because I have an object in making good—a goal that I'll spend my whole life, if need be, in winning. I can't say any more about it now. I have no right to. I hoped I could by this morning. But some day I shall! And now that there are no air-castles to keep me awake, I'm going upstairs for some sleep before the matinee."

The excuse was far-fetched, but he could talk no longer without uttering the words that hammered at his heart. Not daring to look back at the silent little figure in the middle of the room, he hurried away.

VI

At five o'clock the next afternoon a scout from Gennaro came scurrying to the stuffy little boarding-house, and, standing in the hall, the messenger ordered Spurgeon in the impresario's name to come with all haste to the Opera House. In accordance with this imperative summons, ten minutes later Hugh entered the private office, to find Gennaro pacing up and down in its close confines.

"Spurgeon!" burst out the impresario, "we're in the very deuce of a fix!"

"Yes?" queried Hugh indifferently. "Under the circumstances, you can hardly expect me to be heartbroken over that."

"Listen," went on Gennaro. "Gorsky's failed us. He—"

"It seems to be growing into a habit with him."

"Oh, it isn't drink this time. It's worse."

He thought he was over his cold; his voice seemed as good as ever. But while he was practising at his hotel this afternoon his throat all at once went back on him. He couldn't sing a note. He couldn't even speak. He sent for two specialists. They found the vocal chords are temporarily paralysed.

"That's interesting."

"The cold, the change of climate and his overwrought nervous condition, they say, have caused the paralysis. They don't think it will be permanent, but he can't sing again for a month, at the earliest."

Hugh was not surprised, knowing as he did that the human voice is the most fickle and uncertain of gifts, perfect one day and utterly gone the next. He knew also that temporary vocal paralysis, following a strain or a cold or sharp change of climate, is no rarity, and once again the lamp of hope burned high. He made no comment, however, but waited with outward indifference for the impresario to continue. His own mind was working rapidly, though, and with startling clearness.

"That means," continued Gennaro, "that I won't make a penny off Gorsky. He'll prove a dead loss all round, unless——"

He paused, but Spurgeon did not help him out.

"Unless," went on Gennaro desperately, forced to speech by the other's silence, "you'll sing his rôle of Carlo again to-night. The house is sold out; it is the last penny I'll ever get back on my Gorsky investment. To-morrow I can announce that his voice is gone and I can look for another European tenor whose name means as much at the box office, but to-night I've simply got to give *Luisa Miller* with 'Gorsky' as the star. If I put on some other opera, two-thirds of the audience will insist on 'money back.' That means a loss it makes me sick to think of."

"As I said," remarked Spurgeon, as Gennaro once more paused expectantly, "that is interesting, but how does it concern me?"

"You'll sing again to-night, won't you, old man?" cooed Gennaro. "Think what it means to us all!"

"I'm thinking what it didn't mean to me last night," replied Spurgeon. "A night of toil and danger and attempted murder—and not one penny extra pay."

"You can count on my gratitude——"

"So you said before."

"Look here!" blustered Gennaro, "by your contract you are legally obliged to sing whatever I order you to sing. And I order you to sing Carlo to-night."

"And I refuse," said Spurgeon politely.

"Do you know," stormed Gennaro, "I can not only fire you for refusing, but I can sue you in the courts for breach of contract? I can——"

"You can," assented Spurgeon; "you can do a lot of things. But the very first thing you can and will do is to lose some hundreds of pounds in forfeited tickets if 'Gorsky' doesn't sing to-night. And you'll also get one

more black eye with the public for disappointing an audience. That will eventually put you out of pocket by a good many times the original loss."

"You refuse to sing?"

"I think I mentioned that decision," was the calm retort.

"You are discharged. Now go and sell the story to the newspapers, if you think anyone will believe you."

"Blackmail is not one of my accomplishments. The story is safe with me, and you know it. But I accept the discharge. Good day."

"Come back here!" roared Gennaro, as Spurgeon reached the door. "Sit down. Don't get a swelled head. That's the trouble with all you great artists. I was only joking."

"Pardon my rudeness in forgetting to laugh," said Hugh, reseating himself.

"Now, then," continued Gennaro, ungraciously, "you've got us where you want us. What do you ask? I'll give you fifty pounds for——"

"What do I ask?" interrupted Spurgeon.

"Just this: I ask what I merit and what will be as profitable to you as to myself. London has given its full approval of my singing, and there is no question of my ability to prove a drawing card here. Instead of scouring Europe for a fat, middle-aged tenor who has made a name there, I want you to bill me as a find of your own."

"What!"

"As an English tenor whom you introduce to English audiences, on his own ability and not on a Continental reputation. I want a contract, too. Not for a term of years, but for the remainder of this present season. If I don't make good with the public by that time you will be very little out of pocket and you'll be under no obligations to renew my contract. The contract will call for not less than two performances a week. And, as it is an experiment, I'll sing for thirty pounds a performance, beginning with to-night. There isn't another first-class tenor anywhere that you could get so absurdly cheap. So, you see, I'm meeting you more than half way. If I make good we'll make far different terms for next year. How about it?"

Spurgeon braced himself for an explosion, an outburst, at the very least a half-hour of wheedling argument on Gennaro's part. Instead, the impresario, after a minute of thought-laden silence, said with a sigh of surrender:

"Thirty pounds a performance to the end of the season. As you say, it's an experiment that may win a lot of money for us both. And it won't break me. I'll—I'll do it."

"The contract?"

"It will be ready for you to sign to-morrow morning, just as early as I can get my lawyer to draw it up."

"Good!" said Hugh, trying to swallow the lump in his throat and to speak with some degree of calmness. "To-night I'll make my

last appearance as Danilo Gorsky; and within a week I'll sing to London as Hugh Spurgeon."

And to himself he added exultantly:

"And before the ink is dry on my contract I'll ask Claire Braith to be my wife. I'll have the right to, then, if ever a man had. And now to tell her the wonderful news and then get back here to dress!"

The first act of *Luisa Miller* was over. Spurgeon had just gone to his dressing-room to prepare for the second act, when a knock sounded at the door, and a grinning call-boy appeared on the threshold.

He handed Hugh an envelope with a hastily pencilled address.

"Miss Braith told me to bring it to you," went on the boy, lingering in the doorway.

He waited, in the very evident hope of hearing what Spurgeon would say about the note, but the young man remained disappointingly silent.

"Any answer?" he asked insinuatingly at last.

"No," returned Spurgeon, who had torn open the envelope and was reading with incredulous wonder the dozen pencilled lines on the sheet it contained.

"I say," added the boy, loath to leave, "that man Knesh, who tried to out you with a knife the other night, got past the door somehow, and was foolin' around here this evenin'. Said he'd come for some of Gorsky's things. We pitched him out, an' Signor Gennaro's fixed it so he can't ever get inside here again. The guv'nor was awful mad." And the urchin grinned reminiscently at the excitable manager's display of wrath.

Then, seeing he could not lure the utterly engrossed tenor into pleasant conversation, nor so much as extract a word from him, the boy sniffed contemptuously and withdrew, slamming the door behind him. Hugh scarce heard him go. For the second time he was reading Claire's scrawled note. It read:

"Terrible news! I heard Signor Gennaro talking to Mr. Rogers in the wings while the first act was on. He was laughing at the way he fooled you into believing he would give you a contract and thirty pounds a performance. He says he told you he would, because it was the only way to 'jolly' you into helping him out to-night; and that when you come for your contract to-morrow morning he's going to give you your 'marching orders' instead. The brute! He says there were no witnesses to his promise and that you can't hold him to it. Oh, I'm so sorry, Hugh! So sorry! Can't you do anything? I'm writing this now in the faint hope that you can."

"CLAIRE."

VII

As the note fluttered from his nerveless hands and fell to the dressing-table, Hugh caught a glimpse of his own face in the flawed glass.

Through the mask of make-up it showed lined and haggard and suddenly old. Mechanically he began to change his costume for the second act; his brain for the moment was numb.

With deft fingers, unguided by his conscious mind, he swiftly donned the violet court dress and buckled to his side the gold-hilted rapier. Now that the task of dressing was achieved his hand began to shake, more with impotent rage than with nervousness.

"And she asks if I cannot 'do anything?'" he muttered to himself. "What can one square man do against that crowd of crooks?"

He started for the door, then remembered his customary throat spray. He turned and picked up the atomizer, but his fingers shook and the bottle slipped from his careless grasp and fell on the deal table. A drop, knocked from its nozzle by the impact, splattered across Claire Braith's note.

Spurgeon started to move the note to one side as he recovered the atomizer, then, with a gasp, he paused and stood transfixed. For the white paper, where the drop from the atomizer had splashed, was quickly turning black, and ere another instant the dark spots had deepened, burning holes clean through the paper.

"Vitriol!" panted Spurgeon aloud.

A shudder ran through him and he sank helpless into a chair, murmuring dazedly:

"Vitriol! Vitriol! Liquid flame! And in another instant I should have sprayed my throat with it!"

The horrible thought turned him sick from head to foot. Then, little by little, he understood. He remembered the call-boy's chance remark about Knesh's presence in the Opera House that evening. The fanatic, failing to avenge his beloved master's imaginary wrongs by use of the knife, had evidently resorted to this devilishly ingenious scheme to ruin for ever the supposed "supplanter's" voice.

Then at last, through the sickness that possessed his very soul, a wave of wholesome, all-engrossing anger rushed over the young singer. The trick that had so nearly destroyed his voice roused him to fury, and with wrath came clearness of head, renewed bulldog pluck and—inspiration.

"She asked if I couldn't 'do anything!'" he exclaimed. "Well, I can. And, by the Lord, I'll do it!"

Upheld by the strange exaltation that enveloped him as a garment, Spurgeon returned to the stage. His singing in the second act was inspired. Vaguely he wondered at his own unwonted powers. Never before had he sung so. Seldom before had a London audience been so gripped by the fierce magnetism of an opera singer. The great aria raised a whirlwind ovation, and as the curtain went down after the second act the house was on its feet in a gale of enthusiasm. Again and again Spurgeon was forced to come before the curtain.

At the fifth recall Spurgeon caught Gennaro by the arm and dragged him before the curtain to share with him the plaudits. The pleased

impresario, making a show of resistance and embarrassment, stood smiling and bowing by the tenor's side, while the house clapped and the gallery gods hoarsely yelled "Bravo!"

Suddenly, still keeping his grip tight on Gennaro's arm, Spurgeon raised his free hand imperiously for silence. And the audience in an instant was mute and tense.

Here was an innovation with a vengeance! Never before, in the memory of the oldest music critic, had a grand opera tenor "stepped out of his part" to address spoken words to a London audience, as was this singer's evident intent. It was unheard of—non-ethical, anything you choose. Moreover, it was known that Gorsky spoke not a word of English.

Then Spurgeon began. Speaking swiftly, yet with absolute distinctness, he said:

"I give you my heartfelt thanks—and my apologies. My thanks for your generous approval. My apologies for deceiving you. I am not Danilo Gorsky. He has lost his voice. And, at both his scheduled performances, I have taken his place."

A sharp gasp ran through the house. Gennaro tugged madly and vainly to tear himself free from Spurgeon's iron grip, and mumbled unintelligible, frenzied exhortations for silence. But Hugh went on:

"I am Hugh Spurgeon, a Britisher like yourselves. When Gorsky was unable to sing, Signor Gennaro asked me to take his place. And I am deeply grateful that the critics and the public have all so unqualifiedly endorsed my singing. Critics and public alike have excelled themselves in doing so. They can scarcely withdraw their plaudits now that they know their praise was for a fellow-countryman and not for a foreigner.

"In view of the favour I have received at your hands, Signor Gennaro has kindly offered me a contract and has pledged himself to feature me henceforth, under my own name, in a number of lyric tenor rôles, and to-morrow morning I am to sign the contract that will give me the right to earn your approbation in the future as in the past. You will give me a chance to merit that approbation, will you not?"

There was a second of dead silence as Hugh ceased. Into his appeal he had thrown all the fire and magnetism in his newly aroused nature. Yet for one awful instant he felt

his heart sink as he awaited the verdict of the most critical jury on earth.

Then someone in the gallery split the silence with a yell of "Bravo, Spurgeon!" someone else clapped, and like a mine explosion the spark of enthusiasm leaped into a flame that swept the whole great house.

The auditorium rocked to an applause that was as unmistakably spontaneous as it was deafening, while amid the hand-clapping and cries there was a silver thread of laughter. But it was the kindly, indulgent laughter of the man who forgives a joke on himself.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Hugh, once more raising his free hand for silence, "I haven't words enough to thank you, but I am going to devote my life to deserving this trust and approval of yours. And now, ladies and gentlemen, Signor Gennaro would like to say a word, by your courtesy, in endorsement of what I have told you."

Came another round of applause, under cover of which Spurgeon whispered swiftly to the dumbfounded and helpless impresario:

"Deny what I've said, and your popularity with your audience will be gone. I think your shrewdness will tell you so."

And Gennaro realized the truth of Spurgeon's claim. Indeed, before Hugh's speech was half finished the impresario had not only realized it, but had resolved to capitalize the unprecedented advertisement he would thus glean for his opera house and for his new singer. The quick grasp of opportunities that had raised Gennaro from poverty to wealth stood him in good stead now.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he faltered, "I can only add my endorsement to what Mr. Spurgeon has said. I add my apologies to his for the deception whereby I sought to retain your favour, and I congratulate both you and myself on the acquisition of so excellent a tenor for our Opera House."

"There!" murmured Spurgeon cheerfully, as the applause again broke out. "I fancy we've enough witnesses to our contract now, Signor Gennaro. By the way, I want to speak to one of your dancers, Miss Claire Braith, before the next act begins. I've a question to ask her, and if her answer is what I hope and pray it may be—why, there'll be a vacancy in your corps de ballet to-morrow."

There was.

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THE FUN PAGES

Signs and Wonders

EVERYBODY has heard about the language of flowers; the language of umbrellas is not so well known, so—

An umbrella carried over a woman, the man getting nothing but the drippings, signifies courtship; when the man has the umbrella and the woman the drippings it means marriage. Placing your umbrella in a rack at a restaurant or hotel indicates that it will change ownership. To buy an umbrella indicates honesty; to lend an umbrella indicates stupidity; to return a borrowed umbrella indicates—well, nobody ever does that. To start out in the morning with an umbrella means that there will be no rain. To carry an umbrella horizontally under the arm suggests that the carrier has some interest in an oculist's or an optician's business.

* * *

Maddening

ONE of the patients in a mental hospital sat dangling a walking-stick, with string attached, over a flower bed.

A visitor approached and, wishing to be affable, remarked: "How many have you caught?"

"You're the ninth," was the lunatic's reply.

* * *

Neat

SHE: "See that girl in the first row of the stalls? Don't you think she's awfully young to wear such a décolleté gown?"

HE: "Well, she certainly seems rather a stripling."

* * *

Gone Away

"WHERE is the man who keeps this restaurant?" asked a disgruntled patron.

"He's gone out to lunch, sir," replied the waiter.

* * *

Another Libel

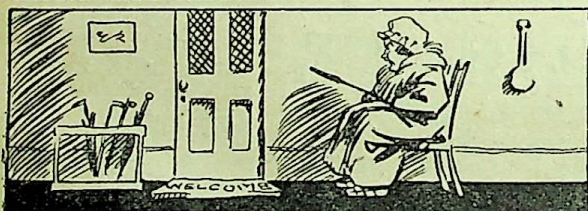
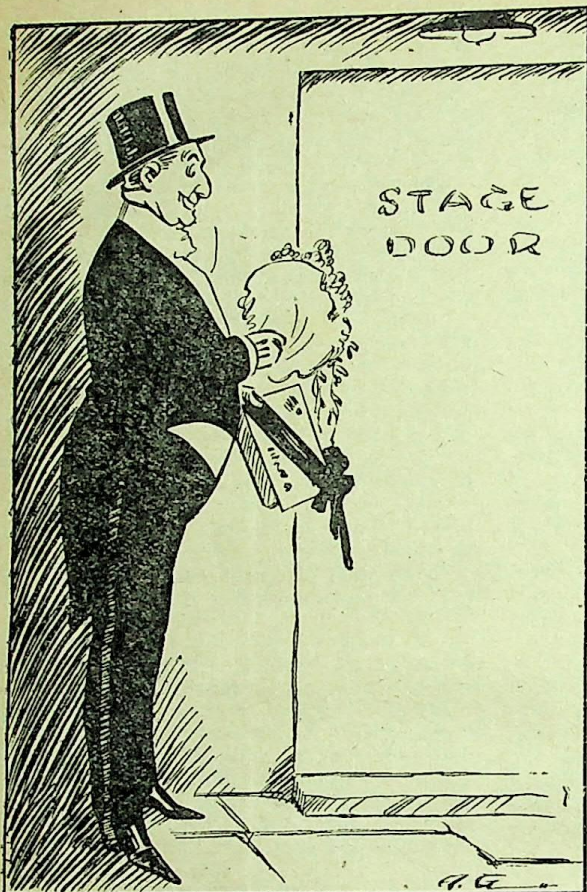
"Did you hear that poor old Ikey Abrahams was dead?"

"No, indeed! What did he die of?"

"Well, a Scotsman of his acquaintance paid him the half-crown he owed him."

"And he died of shock, eh?"

"No, he died of lead poisoning."



A Little Play in Two Acts

From Our Fact Factory

The cause of cold feet is cold weather. Those who most appreciate that this is a hard world are quarry-men.

Men with iron constitutions should never drink water, unless they don't mind rusting.

All is not gold that glitters, and news is not so black as it is sometimes printed.

Most nice girls are nervous when being proposed to—in case of an interruption.

A good preventive of wine and beer stains on clothes is—Prohibition.

Why some married men dislike rice is because it is associated with a great mistake they once made.

The little girl who wouldn't play let's-pretend—we're-married had been told by her mother that she was never to fight.

Man's mission in life, when married, is to pay for what his wife wants.

When a woman dresses in comfort regardless of style is—never.

A woman who shrinks from a life of monotony should marry a man to reform him.

Some men ask bill collectors to call again, others dare 'em to.

FIREWORKS?
Archibald snorted at breakfast. "No, Mrs. Sertin, I shall not bring any fireworks. Burnin' money, I call it!"

But later in the day, having twice defeated his friend Mumford at dominoes, Archie began to think that it wouldn't be bad fun to buy a few squibs for the kiddies.

"There y'are, my love," he declaimed as he landed home, "eighteen bob's worth of the best!"

"O-o-oh!" quavered Mrs. Sertin; "oh, you were so p-p-positive you wouldn't, and I—I—the children pleaded so hard, I—I went and bought five shillings' worth myself."

"The de—"

"Miss Smiggins to speak to you on the 'phone, ma'am," shrilled Susette from the hall.

"Aunt Deborah! Now what the dooce does she want?" snarled Archibald.

Interval for five minutes' frenzied gush on the telephone, bits of which floated in to Archibald in the dining-room:

"How awfully sweet of you, auntie, dear. . . . What? Yes, dear, come at once. We shall be expecting you. . . . Eh? Seven shillins' worth? How lovely. . . . Thanks; it's really too frightfully kind of you."

"Archibald," said Amelia, her tone changing from sunshine to frost, "she's—she's coming round, and bringing seven shillings' worth of fireworks with her."

"Great squibs!" her husband groaned. "But never mind, my darling, the more the—the smellier."

The Sertins' garden that night was a saturnalia of pops and bangs and linked luminosity long drawn out. Aunt Deborah, wrapped in shawls and comforters, had been installed in a large arm-chair to witness the fun. Archibald himself conducted the chief operations.

Now there's quite an art in properly letting off a squib, and Archibald gave himself a nasty jar or two before properly acquiring it.

"Ah! this is the idea," he chuckled—"just you watch your daddy, my dears. You whirl the lighted squib around at arm's length—so!—once, twice, or three times, and then you give it a good hard throw—like this—and if you've judged it correctly it'll go off 'pop' up in the air."

Archie couldn't have judged it quite correctly, for instead of exploding in mid-air, it alighted on the gravel path at Aunt Deborah's feet, and lay there spitting sparks and flame.

This was where Trotters, the dog, took a paw in the game. Misunderstanding his master's wishes in the matter, he dashed forward to retrieve

THE INGLORIOUS FIFTH

Archibald Sertin has a hot time—to say nothing of the aunt.

the firework. With his tail going forty ways to the second, he grabbed the squib and had got half-way back to lay it at Archie's feet before the overdue explosion occurred. . . . When the smoke lifted, a sadder and wiser Trotters was seen making desperate efforts to dig himself a grave in a flower-bed.

"P'raps I ought to give 'em four twirls," mused Archibald, as he let off a squib—"Hallo! there's the boy with my evenin' paper."

While fumbling for a penny Archibald absently stuck the end of the fizzing squib between his teeth as if it were his cigar.

The newspaper boy watched the firework with eager, fascinated eyes.

"Here's a sixpence, then—you can keep the change!" said Archibald at last.

Bang! The squib exploded with a backward kick that landed the master in a clump of Michaelmas daisies.

"Archibald!" Amelia shrilled, "whatever are you doing?"

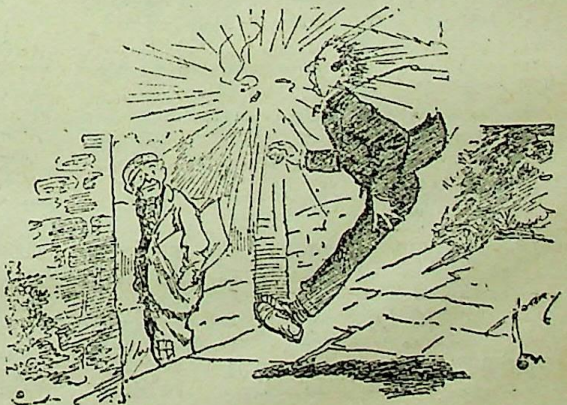
"N-n-nothing, my dear," was the very untruthful answer, for Archie was trying very hard, though very futilely, to push his face back into its usual shape. "Wh-what's become of those bloys, 'Melia? Plercy! P-p-plercy!"

A piercing shriek from Aunt Deborah was the only answer. That usually placid spinster suddenly leapt from her seat and sprinted furiously down the garden path, closely followed by a bunch of animated gunpowder.

Amelia squealed, Trotters barked, while Percy and Eddy lurked somewhere in the shadows.

Archie quickly grasped the situation—but not the cracker! On and on ran auntie, the cracker dogging her footsteps.

"Those little ruffians have tied about a dozen of 'em to her skirt," our hero



The squib exploded with a backward kick

groaned. "Stop! stand still for just a moment, auntie!" he beseeched her, and at last Aunt Deborah did stand still from sheer exhaustion, with that extraordinarily

long-lived cracker still hopping and popping around her.

Archibald saw her sway from side to side and throw out her arms, and he had barely time to straddle out his legs for a good grip on the ground when Aunt Deborah's fourteen stone collapsed upon his chest.

The boys at that very moment touched off a pennyworth of red fire, and the figures of Archie and his aunt-in-law were thrown out in lurid relief, like a sculptor's nightmare in terra-cotta.

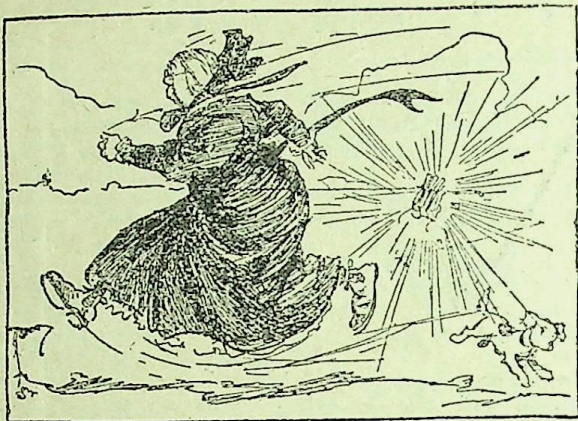
"Bravo! Bravo!" shouted neighbour Mumford from the doorway. He had just come to pay a friendly call and had been shown through to the garden by Susette. He applauded vigorously, and said it was the most touching little set-piece he had ever seen.

"Set-piece?" frothed Archibald when Amelia had taken over the work of restoring Miss Smiggins to consciousness. "There's going to be a nice little set-piece for somebody by and by! Upstairs I've got a nice little length of

leather I strop my razor blades on; hush! I b'lieve the old geeser's going!"

"There you are!" said Archie, sweeping aside the front curtains and pointing dramatically to the nodding bonnet of the parting guest — "there goes four thousand pounds in Consols, me lad. Dash it all! . . . O-o-o-h, my face!"

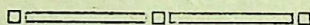
"Your face? Why, Sertin, old chappie, I've only just noticed it. Your jaw's slipped, old sport!" Here! just let's give your phiz a good push sideways, old man; p'raps I could —



Sprinted down the garden path, followed by a bunch of animated gunpowder

"Never!" yelled Archibald with a leap backwards. "You pp-push your own ugly mug, and boil it too, if you like. . . . Coming, my love; coming!" as Amelia from above stairs tenderly asked him whether he didn't think he'd made himself enough of an idiot for one evening

Archibald has been heard to remark that he will never cease to remember the Fifth of November. Even if he lives to be as old as Mr. Clutterbuck, the rate-collector, he will never, never, forget it; but in the matter of fireworks for the children he will carefully remember *not* to remember the Fifth of November.



TOLD IN THE GARAGE

Too Risky

"ONE more question, Mr. Miff," said the insurance agent as he filled out Miff's application blank for a fat policy. "What make of car do you drive?"

"Why, I don't drive any," said Miff, "I hate them."

"Sorry, then, Mr. Miff," said the agent as he tore up the application, "but our company no longer insures pedestrians."

* * *

Fancy Motoring

By following these directions faithfully you can obtain, in the privacy of your own domicile, all the displeasures of motoring.

Have two of the largest members of the family sit in the morris chair. Place two dining-room chairs directly in front and pile the rest of the family into them. For door-closing effect procure a hammer and smash a couple of the youngsters' fingers.

For proper odours concoct a mixture of three parts petrol, one part oil, two parts decayed fruit and six parts mud. Sprinkle liberally throughout apartment.

Call in a burly neighbour with ample vocabulary and get him to abuse you as much as possible. Have the kiddies make faces at him, and be sure he carries his trinket so prominently that the baby will cry for it.

Place box of dry dirt in front of electric fan. As refreshments, serve warm orangeade and partly cooked sausages. Feed the younger children with nuts and with sticky toffy.

Connect hose with cold-water tap and spray entire party.

* * *

Some Compromise

"He wanted several children and she wanted a motor-car."

"Yes—they finally compromised on one baby and a perambulator!"



"What does it say, dear?"
"It tells us to take some darned fool pill."

Willing to Try It

MRS. NEWRICHE had achieved one of her ambitions—she had just been introduced to a distinguished Chinese mandarin on a visit to London.

"Me no speak velly good Chinese," she shouted.

The dignified Celestial bowed politely. "Never mind, madam," he remarked. "I think I can manage to converse tolerably well in English for half an hour or so."

* * *

Making It Clear

EMINENT K.C. (examining a witness): "Now, did you—I know you didn't, but I am bound to put it to you—on the twenty-first—it was not the twenty-first really, it was the twenty-third; it is a mistake in my brief—see the defendant—he is not the defendant really; he is the plaintiff; there is a counter-claim, but you wouldn't understand that— Yes or no?"

Witness: "Yes or no—what?"

* * *

Easy!

"I've been trying to think of a word for two weeks."

"How about 'fortnight'?"

No Excuse

"I WAS so confused, I don't know how many times he kissed me!"

"Rubbish! With the thing going on right under your nose."

* * *

Diplomat

"Wives should have wages,"

She said to her hub

"You're right," he answered,

"But here is the rub:

Though I had all riches

From far and from near,

There'd be too little

To pay you, my dear."

She kissed him and whispered,

"What sweet things you say!"

Another crisis

Had vanished away.

EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER.

* * *

Sound

THE man who always knows had just concluded a lengthy recital of his opinion of the League of Nations.

"Don't you consider my views on the subject sound?" he demanded.

His bored friend stifled a yawn.

"Yes, mostly sound," he replied.



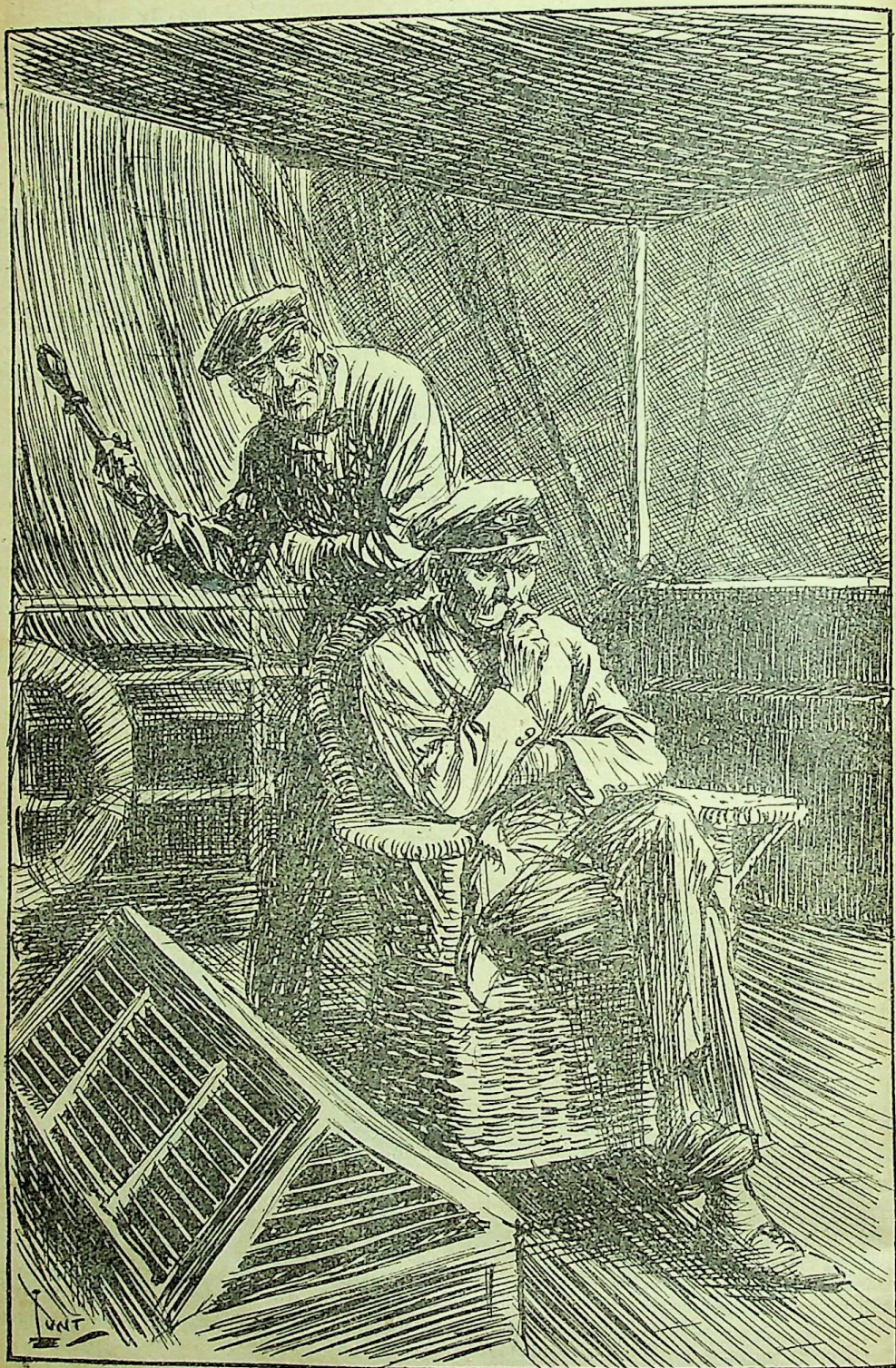
"What? You say you can tell what is in other people's minds?"

"I do."

"Then you know what I'm thinking about?"

"Yes."

"Then why the deuce don't you go there?"



The captain did not hear the shuffling footfall behind him so intent was he on his thoughts
Read "The Unforeseen" commencing on opposite page

THE UNFORESEEN

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

THE captain brought down his fist with a crack on the starboard taffrail of the poop. His voice was hard, metallic almost, and his eyes glinted coldly from beneath his bushy white brows. Even his ruffle of heavy white moustache seemed to swell and stiffen with his anger.

"I've heard enough excuses. Three times I've told you not to knock the hands about, and three times you've disobeyed me. This is the finish. I'm paying you off in Apia. Look there! . . . Do you think I'm standing for that sort of thing?"

With a scowl the beefy, heavy-jawed mate swung sullenly round and watched the three kanakas 'midships lift another from the deck and carry him for'ard. The injured man was moaning piteously, and the blood trickled from a cut in his temple on to the white planking. The mate swung round again and rasped his unshaven jaw with a dirty-nailed hand.

"The swine was coiling the halyards left-handed, sir," he mumbled in protest and his own defence.

The captain's snort was expressive. He rammed his hands with considerable force into the pockets of his white duck pants and glared. Ten years before he would have struck the other man, but age had taught him control.

"He's a new hand. We only shipped him in Guam. Hang it, were you never a new hand? Do you know the days of that 'bucko' stuff are past? If I were a younger man I'd thrash you within an inch of your life. Get out of my sight!"

With a suppressed oath the mate strode across the poop and leant against the port rail. He rolled a cigarette with passion-shaken fingers while he brooded over his wrongs, real or fancied. His turn would come, was coming. He would repay the captain in full for having made a fool out of him in front of the crew. The warm trade wind ruffled the matted dark hair of his broad chest, exposed by the unbuttoned front of the blue cotton shirt he wore, and tugged at the brim of

the wide *Fala** hat that drooped over his smouldering dark eyes. He was not a particularly tall man, but he was very broad and stockily built, and from the toes of his rope-soled shoes to the cords of his bull neck he was suggestive of strength.

The captain glared for a moment on the hunched back of his mutinous mate, and then puffed off, his hands still thrust in his pockets, his white-covered peak cap jammed over his brows, and his determined jaw thrust forward aggressively. He snorted again, as meaningly as before, as he entered the stuffy little chart-room that nestled in the end of the saloon-house just for'ard of the wheel.

The brigantine *Flying Fish* was homeward bound. Her holds were heavy with a miscellaneous cargo, the proceeds of a prosperous trading voyage; sacked copra, sickly smelling and sweet; odorous shark's fins, pearl-shell, whale-bone; and in the safe below, in the captain's cabin, reposed nearly one hundred pounds of carefully collected ambergris, worth perhaps as much as the rest of the cargo put together.

For a trading vessel the *Flying Fish* was somewhat delicately built. Her long, streaming lines gave her a rather snaky appearance, strangely out of keeping with the pot-bellied looks of the average Island trading vessel. But then the *Flying Fish* had, in her youth, raced for silver cups at Cowes and off the Maine coast, which somewhat explains matters.

If her yacht fame was past, she was famous now for other things. Her sailing records were the admiration and envy of every "windjammer" skipper in the Pacific, and not a few barque and full-rigged ships had to give way to her when she was running, beautifully light and easy, with a gale on her quarter. She was famous for her brasswork, it had never been removed since her yacht days, invariably kept highly polished and innocent of lacquer; for her beautifully carved,

* Native hat of bleached pandanus leaves

gilt Neptune figurehead; for her well-kept decks and exquisitely furnished cabins and saloon; and more so for her captain and owner, Wallace Hawke, who stood prominent among the big men of the Islands, and who had grown with the Pacific trade from the days of "Bully" Hayes onward. He was wealthy and he was no longer young, and there was no reason why he should sail his own ship. But like an old war-horse he was liveliest on the battlefield, and he stuck to the sea he loved for the sake of the game he had always played. Only the younger Island generation wondered why he chose to poke and pry about in odd corners still, instead of retiring to Sydney or Suva and enjoying himself there; the older generation understood.

With a good cigar between his teeth, his bronzed, lean body stretched in a springy cane chair under the poop awnings, and a bottle of good whisky at his elbow, the captain was very much at his ease. The night was cool, rather a change for the latitude, and the glassy sea was a welter of gold where the porpoises leapt and gambolled. The stars were in their full glory, shooting beams of light across the low swells, the moon had not yet risen, and the combined noises of the tumbling wake, the musical ripple of the water along the hull, the occasional creak of the wheel, and the low throbbing boom of the wind in the arch of the canvas, combined with a soothing effect.

The second mate, whose watch it was, had gone for'ard into the starlight and shadow to see to some trifling work on the jib-boom, and except for the helmsman, who could not see for'ard because of the dim light of the binnacle in his eyes, the captain was alone.

He pitched his cigar overboard and yawned, coughed gruffly, and pulled at his moustache with fingers disfigured by years of reefing hard sails and splicing harder rope. He was in a thoughtful mood. The lack of any important excitement on the voyage had warned him that either the Islands were getting civilized, which they never will, or that he was growing too old to be thrilled. He had been born and bred with adventure, and he would have to die with it. It is like a drug, or liquor, or smoking, or like the sea itself, once taken it calls imperatively and insistently.

His thoughts reverted to the mate, Buck Standing, and he tugged his moustache fiercely as his anger stirred and ruffled within him. It was not necessary to knock men about to get work done. The good officer was the man who could command without even raising his voice. . . . The captain did not hear the shuffling footfall behind him, so intent was he on his thoughts. . . . Well, the mate would have to get out in Apia, and then perhaps the second, young Hunter, should have his rise and his chance to make good. . . . The belaying-pin caught him under the ear and he went limp with hardly a groan, though he retained his senses a little. Strong arms lifted him, carried him to the taffrail and let go. He tried to struggle, but could not move a limb. The sound of the water, the wind and the wheel grew together in a jumbled roar in his ears. He tried to call out, but darkness clouded his eyes and seemed to clog his throat. He felt the wind ruffle his hair as he plunged downward. The splash was drowned by the boom of the wind in the arched sail of the mainmast.

The mate chuckled softly as he saw the white-clothed, sprawling figure melt into the swirl of the wake, and he thought with gratification of the rich cargo under his feet and the one hundred pounds of ambergris below in the safe in the captain's cabin. It was worth trying for. There were dozens of places in little-known seas where a ship could be disposed of without too many questions being asked. The *Flying Fish* slid on her course, and the nodding helmsman saw nothing, heard nothing.

The belaying-pin, striking partially against the back of the cane chair, had not completely stunned the captain. The shock of plunging under water, and then slowly rising to the surface, roused him somewhat. He struggled feebly for breath and life, the instinct to live beating aside the numbness that was creeping over his faculties. Involuntarily he moaned. Then he choked as the sea gurgled into his lungs, coughed, and drew together his scattered wits. In less than a minute he was swimming strongly, and keenly aware of a splitting headache and of a lump that rose with alarming swiftness under his white hair. The initial shock over, he was conscious that he was thrilled. The knowledge made him laugh. And he had

'thought the Islands were getting tame and civilized!

"Now who the devil could that have been?" he murmured, as he slid down a glassy sea slope and heard the suddenly shut off wind whispering over the ruffled crests above him. "Must have been Standing. . . . And I picked him off the beach in Perth when he hadn't a penny to call his own. Some people have a sense of gratitude. I expect this is for the calling down I gave him this afternoon. . . . I was wishing for variety. And I've got it!" He grinned whimsically, very much like a boy. Adventure belongs to youth, and it's followers are always young.

Raising himself out of the water the captain could see, as he rose on the crest of a slithering swell, the white stern-light of the *Flying Fish* bobbing up and down and fast fading from view. He sighed philosophically as he turned on his back and floated. He supposed it was the end. They would never hear him call aboard the brigantine. The sea was warm and he would not cramp, but the heat of the morrow's sun would finally drive him insane, even if a shark did not pick him up before then. One thing, the *Flying Fish* had been dead in the lane of the Apia-bound traders, and there was a chance, one in a thousand, that he would see a ship in the morning. A long chance, it was true, but still better than no chance at all.

He wriggled out of his white uniform suit. It made floating easier. He began to wonder what Standing would say, and grinned in the starlight. The beggar had enough nerve to sail into Apia and declare that the captain had been washed overboard in a sea. Perhaps he would even forge papers and declare he had bought the ship. But of course Hunter would stop that little game before— A splashing near by attracted his attention, and caused him to roll over with a cold hand clutching at his heart. A shark! He caught sight of a dark, round object on the crest of a swell, and with a sudden determination to have it over with he swam towards it. His nerves were not very steady, for he was not so young as he had been. He found time to remember that he had lived as clean as most men, and had always played the game. He swam on, his face set. A white patch revealed itself in the centre of the black, and then the captain shouted wonder-

ingly, but with relief. He felt his released heart thump. In a few moments he was gaping at the man he had been last thinking of.

"Hunter, what the devil are *you* doing here?"

The second mate gasped. His mouth opened and shut as he strove to speak. His battered and bloody face worked with emotion, and his eyes were wide with alarm. It was plain he was badly scared by his predicament.

"You! . . . That you, c-cap'n?" he half sobbed. "C-cap'n, what shall we do? I thought you were dead . . . dead! It's murder! We're done for!" He was well-nigh hysterical for a few moments, wasting his strength on useless threshing about. He raised himself time and again out of the water and shouted after the vanishing ship, already long out of ear-shot. The captain swam up to the frightened man and shook him roughly.

"Pull yourself together, Hunter. All this won't do any good. Tell me what happened. Come, now!"

The young man coughed as a ripple lapped into his mouth. He shook his head, dashed the water from his eyes, and began to steady himself. The captain's calm voice acted like a tonic.

"R-right, sir," he gasped, catching his breath. He swam slower and composed his shattered nerves. After a moment he sighed with relief as it came to him that he was in no immediate danger.

"I saw—saw the mate ditch you overboard, sir, as I came up the poop companion. I tried to stop him, but he was too quick. Then he swiped at me with a belaying-pin wrapped in burlap. . . . He must have hit you with that. . . . We fought for a bit, and then he caught me a smash side of the head and ditched me too. Dirty rotter! Do you think there's any chance?"

"There's all kinds of chances," soothed the captain, knowing in his heart that the one in a thousand was all that was to be expected. It was harder for the younger man to face the almost inevitable end. He had the cream of his glorious youth still to enjoy, while the captain was past such enjoyments. Because he could sympathize and understand the second mate's panic the captain did not think too harshly of him for his fears.

No more was said. Both men were good swimmers, and had no trouble in keeping

afloat. Now that the second mate had got hold of himself he gave no more trouble and said nothing about their predicament. The captain estimated that they were about thirty-five miles off the Samoan coasts, and though he doubted whether either he or Hunter could make the distance, the sturdy spirit of the man forced him to try. Both fell into a steady breast-stroke, and with the sea alive with curious fish about them, and the starlight shafts dancing in their eyes, they headed for the distant land.

Time ceased to be. Each man was busy with his own thoughts. It was probable that each man was looking back over his life and wondering how it would affect the future, if there was any future. The night drew on, and presently, like a silver scimitar, the moon peered over the sea rim. Seen from the level of the water the light gave the swells a ghastly appearance. It was as though the two men moved slowly through a strange world of heavings and whisperings, a sea of quicksilver shot with clear-cut, rapidly changing shadows that chuckled and sobbed as they hurried by.

A school of flying-fish, rising so near the swimming men as to fan their faces with beating wings, sped across the sea valleys and disappeared, still flying, like silver and rainbow cigars. A heavy-bulked, short, black-skinned killer whale shouldered through the water and muzzled the younger man. He gave a startled cry and pressed against the captain, who reassured him that the killer whale, for all that it has the most terrible jaws of any living thing, and that it is the lord of all things in its own element, never attacks man unless first attacked. After nuzzling the nervous Hunter again, and giving the captain a share of attention, the killer lived up to its reputation and slid away in the wake of a curious blue-pointer shark, also harmless to man.

A murmur of voices came down on the wind. Half-dreaming the captain did not heed at first. But the voices persisted. As a huge swell lifted him into the wind the captain stopped swimming and listened. A porpoise rose behind him, snorted and boiled away, drowning all sound. The captain waited until the next swell came. Hunter was listening too, and both men distinctly heard disjointed words. It was uncanny. From the glimpses they caught of it the sea was

innocent of living men. But the shadows were ideal concealment.

Each time the two swimmers rose on a crest they looked rapidly, their hearts beginning to beat high with hope. But it was some time before they saw and understood. Into the path of the moonlight drifted an outrigger canoe. Silhouetted against the silver-sky the moving bodies of the paddlers were plainly visible. Both men shouted, but the wind laughingly carried the sound to leeward.

The captain dropped into a strong side-stroke, and set off across the dim valleys and shining crest, with Hunter close behind. Ten minutes later they stopped swimming and shouted again. This time the paddlers heard. They ceased their work and huddled together in superstitious awe. The whites of their eyes rolled in the gloom of their faces. It would upset the nerve of a level-headed white man to hear voices come out of the sea, especially in the deceptive light of the moon, and if he thought he were alone on that same stretch of water.

After a while one of the natives spied the two bobbing heads, and he shouted throatily with relief as a shaft of moonlight flickered on them for a moment and showed them for the heads of living men. Hastily the natives thrust down with their paddles, and in less than five minutes the swimmers were being hauled aboard and plied with questions by some forty Samoans.

The canoe had set out from Falealupo, in the Samoan group, to run to Apia some six days previously, but a healthy young gale had blown it to sea, and it was now making back for its starting place to take aboard fresh water and provisions. After that it would once more attempt the coast run to Apia. That suited the captain very well, and seizing a paddle, after a brief rest to ease his stiffness, he worked until he was in a glow.

Two weeks later the captain and Hunter drifted into Apia. They had come overland from Mulinu'u Point, and were somewhat sparsely dressed. Stopping at a hut on the outskirts, resided in by one Dick Fisher, an old friend of the captain's, they had procured some clothes that fitted the older man somewhat loosely, and the younger man somewhat tightly. And their grotesque appearance gave them no small embarrassment as

they passed along the streets subjected to the curious stares of natives and white men alike. First of all the captain led a straight way to his private residence, where he fitted himself and Hunter out with a bath and some reasonable clothes. Then he went down town to his trading offices.

Mr. Hayward, the captain's general manager, was a smart young American, who, being straight from a Chicago business college, was a stranger in the Islands, and had thus no prejudices, no likes or dislikes for anyone in particular, and so was above being imposed upon by some of the acquaintances of the captain's younger days. He was an admirable man for the position he held. A perfect wizard at business, clean-shaven, neat, and with a queer, cold smile. Withal he was rather a decent fellow. Without betraying too much surprise he rose from the swivel chair behind his desk and greeted the captain and Hunter with outstretched arms, looking cool and efficient in his immaculate ducks.

"This is a pleasure, sir. How are you? I was expecting you to dock last week."

The captain's brick-red face went redder yet as he shook hands. He puffed out his cheeks and half whistled. Removing his sun helmet he scratched his head and ran his fingers through his white hair. He had been expecting the mate would bring the brig to Apia and report the captain and second mate lost at sea. It was puzzling what else he could do with the ship and cargo. His papers gave him no authority to enter any other port than Apia or Suva.

"Then you haven't seen or heard anything of the *Flying Fish*?" he asked shortly.

The manager's face was a study. He stared curiously, as though unable to believe his ears. He must have thought his employer was insane.

"Why—why—I—you came in on her, didn't you?"

"I did not!"

"Then what—where—"

"Never mind now. You haven't had word of her docking at Suva, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"I'm beaten!" The captain turned to the worried Hunter. "What do you think of it?"

The young man shook his head and grunted. He had never had a similar

experience, and he didn't know what he thought. "Are you going to inform the authorities?" he ventured at last.

The captain snorted and swore.

"And have myself laughed at from one end of the Pacific to the other. Think of it! Captain Hawke pitched off his own ship by a beach-comber he picked up and patted on the back! Look good in the papers, wouldn't it? No, sir. I'll settle this affair in my own way."

He turned and left the office with another snort, his ruffle of white moustache bristling aggressively. Behind him he left the mystified young American to gaze blankly at the Samoan girl stenographer in the outer office. The captain led the way down to the saloon, and later to the waterfront to hear the latest news.

He could not imagine what Standing had done with the ship. It seemed as though the sea had opened and swallowed the mate and the brig. They had had plenty of time to dock in either Suva or Apia. But they must have kept on heading south. The *Flying Fish* represented a considerable fortune, what with the ambergris and the heavy cargo she carried. The captain could not afford to lose her, rich man though he was. Besides, there were sentimental reasons. He had sailed many seas and for many years on the brig, and he loved her as only a sailorman can. He would not relinquish her without an effort. And he wanted, as well, some satisfaction in getting even with the renegade mate. He knew that should he complain to the authorities they would make a perfunctory search, inform all the larger world ports, and then pigeon-hole the complaint and forget the whole affair. Standing would not venture to any of the bigger ports if he intended keeping the brig, he had more sense than that. There were a thousand and one islands in the Pacific where he could hide the brig and tranship her cargo piece by piece in another vessel. There were many ports, little unmarked places, where a man who was known could dispose of a ship without being asked too many questions. The authorities would hardly trouble to make the careful search needed to find the missing ship. The trail would have to be taken up by the captain himself. And perhaps, but this he would not have admitted, the strong, insistent call of adventure was urging

him to go and seek and find, and to tread the dangerous pathways he had always loved.

Many men nodded to the captain, and some few drew him aside to discuss some business matter. All of them inquired after the *Flying Fish*, and were surprised to learn that she had not docked. The captain casually told them when asked that she was still "outside," and no more would he say. But, knowing him, many of the big traders and shipowners began to feel uneasy. He must have something up his sleeve. He was always, or nearly always, a jump ahead of anyone else in any deal that was worth pulling off. And the captain's non-communicative attitude added fresh fuel to rising suspicions. Several little secret conclaves took place in back offices and on board ships, but none could come to any conclusion as to what the captain was up to. Unwittingly he had the commercial part of Apia in a ferment.

While Hunter and the captain were standing on the jetty, eyeing a heavily laden two-masted schooner that rode at anchor in the sunlit harbour, a man touched the latter's arm.

"Say, Wally, I've been waiting here darned near five weeks to see you. Can I talk to you alone?"

With a smile the captain turned and shook hands with the new-comer. He was an enormously thin man, with a large, protruding Adam's apple, and a pair of big, melancholy blue eyes. He was unwashed and unshaven, and his tattered duck trousers, his dirty silk shirt and dirtier shoes, gave evidence of having seen better days. A dilapidated sunhelmet, far too small for the bony head it covered, or partially covered, completed the strange one's outfit. He was a well-known figure in Apia, "Long" Charley, the most notorious toper in all the Islands. A dozen fortunes he had made and drunk away; but as fast as he went broke and to the devil he rose again. Vagrant spasms of fierce energy, and a curious luck that seemed to dog his footsteps, kept him in a series of rises and falls. When he had any scheme in mind, and he always had when he was sober, he invariably came to the captain to stake him, for the two had sailed together when both were very young. "Long" Charley was sober now.

"You can speak before Mr. Hunter.

He's one of my officers," the captain observed, with a wave of his hand towards the bronzed young man with a bruised face who stood by his side.

After a nod of recognition in the direction of the introduced, "Long" Charley plunged into business.

"Say, Wally, I've got a brand-new guano island up north. It's a cinch, and it's going dirt cheap 'cause the bloke what owns it ain't the least idea. . . ."

"Sorry, Charley, but I've got very important business on hand right now. If you're broke I'll see you through until I can look into your proposition. But say,"—a thought struck the captain very forcibly. He raised a stiff forefinger—"I seem to have heard that you were acquainted with Standing?"

The thin one nodded mournfully, and his Adam's apple ran up and down his throat. Tears seemed to well into his big, blue eyes.

"I suppose you're talking of Buck Standing. Eh, I knew him. The blighter skinned me clean and cleared out one night in Cossack. We'd done a little pearling together, and was supposed to be partners. Huh! Know Standing! I'll say I——"

"Never mind that now, Charley. You may be able to help me. What sort of a reputation has Standing got in Australia? Where would he be likely to head for if he got into trouble?"

"Long" Charley scratched his head and stuck his thumbs in the rope yarn that he wore in place of a belt. He slowly unlimbered his thinking apparatus, and frowned heavily as he gazed at the white jetty stones.

"Reputation, reputation," he grunted slowly. "Can't say Standing ever had much reputation, leastways not of the white sort. He was wanted by the Japs for seal poaching, and by the Russians ditto. Then there was some talk about him killing an old man in Cape Town, but I don't know 'bout that. I do know as he was supposed to be hand in glove with Sing Loo. You've heard of him?" The captain shook his head and waited. "Well, he's the skipper of a gang of wrecking junks in the China Seas, principally round the Gulf of Siam way. Leastways, this Sing Loo uster call himself a wrecker, from what I recollect, but you know most of those big junks and praus are pirate craft. Standing used

to be on the regular runs between the islands and China, and used to run his packets up on some reef during his watch for his friends, that's Sing Loo and Co., to come and salvage. They got on to him in the end, the authorities at Singapore and elsewhere, and Standing had to skip in a hurry. Didn't call himself Standing those days. Went by name of Harris—Big Bill Harris. That's where he'd make for if he was pushed right now, to Sing Loo and his gang. But did I tell you how the blighter skinned me clean in Cossack when—"

"Yes, yes, you've spoken of it once, Charley. Listen to me." The captain stopped the thin one's flow of speech with an uplifted hand, and then proceeded to tell him why he was so interested in Buck Standing. When he had finished "Long" Charley whistled, a weird sound that closely resembled a horse's neigh. The interested Hunter chuckled involuntarily.

"That sounds like Standing all right," the thin one observed. "He's the sort of guy that would drop his skipper overboard. What do you aim to do?"

"Get my ship back first, and then shoot Standing. I don't quite know."

"Long" Charley licked his lips, and, taking a pull at the rope yarn that served in place of a belt, he hitched his disgraceful trousers a bit higher. "Let's drink," he suggested.

The captain laughed as he led the way to the saloon and beckoned to the coloured waiter.

"Seems you can't think unless you're oiling the works."

"This is a very dry climate," responded the other mournfully. Over some bottled Bass the affair of the disappearance of the *Flying Fish* and the mutiny of her mate was gone into somewhat deeply.

"I presume, then, it's safe to imagine that Standing is headed for the Gulf of Siam right now? Once there he could easily sell the brig's cargo, and the ambergris would be snapped up by any of the big Chinese perfumeries. The ship, I expect, he would either use to go in with the wreckers, or else sell it to them." The captain spoke thoughtfully, addressing "Long" Charley.

"That's the dope," said the other cheerfully, refreshed by the beer. "It's a cinch he can't go anywhere else much, without papers, and with such a well-

known craft as the *Flying Fish*. If you'd only inform the authorities they would wireless the cruisers, and Standing might get picked up before he even reaches the China Seas."

The captain shook his head irritably. "I've an idea that I can see this thing through myself. If a cruiser goes chasing around my ship she's liable to shoot holes in her before Standing heaves to. No, leave the authorities out of the deal altogether."

"Well, as you please," "Long" Charley shrugged. "Perhaps, if you cared to ship me I could help you locate your man. Then we could go straight on to my island."

"Oh, confound your island! Tell you what, I'll sign you as second mate. Hunter here is going mate. But I haven't a single ship in port of my own."

"Long" Charley thought for a moment, glanced gratefully at the waiter who had refilled his glass, and licked his lips with an overlong tongue.

"There's the *Watchman* in port. Why not charter her?"

"That little two-masted runt! Why, she can't make more'n five knots in a full gale!"

"She's a good little craft just the same. She was the only packet to come through that typhoon in '07 without being a total wreck. I don't know about her not making more'n five knots either. . . . 'Course you can catch the 'Frisco mail packet for Sydney, and charter a fast schooner there."

The captain shook his head. "I never sail on steamships, Charley; you know that. I guess I'll take the *Watchman*, and see how she goes. One thing, we can't get a ship in the Pacific that'll out sail the *Flying Fish*, so speed won't matter much. I'll go and see the *Watchman's* owners right—"

"But she wouldn't answer. I asked her if she wanted to be reported at Apia. A fine craft, too. Brigantine rigged and slim built. I'll wager she's a crack sailer in a good breeze."

The speaker—a young white-uniformed officer at a table a short distance from the one where the captain and his two companions sat—drained his glass and set it down slowly. He was a second officer of a steamship by the look of him, probably of the Australian liner that

had docked only that morning. He was drinking and talking with the harbour-master, a short, red-necked man, with a clipped white torpedo beard, and a long, rather lean face. The captain rose from his chair as he caught the young officer's words and crossed to him.

"Pardon me, sir, I heard you speaking of a ship brigantine-rigged and slim built. Was her name the *Flying Fish* by any chance?"

The young officer looked up surprised at the interruption, and then glanced across at the harbour-master, who rose and laughed.

"This is Captain Wallace Hawke, Mr. Harvey. One of our big men hereabouts. . . . Mr. Hawke, this is George Harvey, my nephew, second mate of the *Kaurie*, came in this morning from Sydney."

The harbour-master introduced the two men with a wave of his hand, and then sat down. The captain sat also, and leaned towards the officer of the *Kaurie*.

"I have a particular reason for getting information about such a ship as I heard you describe to Mr. Carson here. Would you mind repeating the incident you were talking of?"

The young man laughed and drummed on the marble-topped table with his finger-tips.

"Sure, Mr. Hawke," he said, "there isn't much to tell. Three days ago, we had just left Suva, I was on watch—afternoon watch, you know—when we sighted a fine-looking brigantine heading south-east. Soon as she saw us she seemed to sheer off and take a new course. I flagged her and asked her name, and whether she wished to be reported in Apia. But she didn't answer. I thought it rather queer at the time, for there's not many skippers, or officers either, who will refuse to answer a polite message. She kept on sheering off, and in an hour was hull down. Couldn't see her name; so whether she was the *Flying Fish* or not I don't know. Perhaps if you described her——"

The captain described his ship at length, and the officer nodded.

"That's her, sir," he stated conclusively. "She must have been the ship you want. She was heading south-east b' east, as near as I could figure, and crossed our bows about three miles away."

Thanking the man, the captain made his way back to his two companions and

told them what he had learnt. Each man rapidly figured to himself, keeping a chart of those seas in his mind's eye.

"Three days ago off Fiji," murmured "Long" Charley. "She must have fallen into a calm or a head wind after dropping you, Wally. And heading sou'-east b' east. That'd fetch her——"

"Somewhere about the Hebrides," supplemented the captain. He grew thoughtful. "Sounds as if you were right, Charley. He can either make Cape York, run the Straits, and go along the trade lanes past the Celebes, or else—and I expect that's what he'll do—he can change his course and run north of the Bismarcks, and so keep out of the way of ships. You see, he's probably figuring that after a week or so the *Flying Fish* will be listed as 'overdue,' a few weeks more as 'missing,' and finally as 'lost at sea.' He'll see to it that the kanakas he's got aboard keep their mouths shut, and he believes Hunter and I are dead, so that there's none to expose him. The only chance against him is that some ship will report seeing him; and make my agents suspicious. But, then, he can alter the brigantine's name, forge her new papers, and if he keeps out of the regular trade lanes he's not likely to run across a cruiser or gunboat that will think it worth while boarding him just on suspicion. But for the fact of Hunter and I being fortunately saved Standing's got a sure thing, so far as I can see."

Hunter nodded. "Long" Charley also nodded. The thing seemed quite logical enough. From Standing's point of view the whole thing was simple. His chances of getting caught, so long as he kept out of the way of the big ports and of the shipping lanes, were negligible. The captain rose energetically.

"I'll charter the *Watchman* if I can, and we'll get on the trail. Let's get out of here." The three men rose and passed out into the street.

In following up such a half-blind trail as the captain was, he was forced to leave a whole lot to chance. Even supposing Standing sailed for the Gulf of Siam and his wrecker friend, Sing Loo, the captain was just as far from getting back his ship as he was sitting in the saloon in Apia. True, if he once located the brigantine he could demand assistance from the Administration in getting her

back. But, against the advice of "Long" Charley and Hunter, he was determined to wash his own dirty linen, and to keep the officials out of the affair altogether. One card he had up his sleeve, which, if it were not exactly a trump, was at least the next best thing to it. Like most widely travelled sailors he had friends in nearly every port of the world. And in Saigon he was acquainted with Hop Li, who was one of the leading merchants of the town, an owner of trading junks and of several thousand acres of rice and millet fields. As the first step in his search, therefore, the captain sailed on the little *Watchman* for Saigon and the house of Hop Li.

Luck favoured the *Watchman* and she travelled fast, stopping only at Macassar for fresh water and a mess of vegetables for the sea-weary crew. The captain inquired at the port for the *Flying Fish*, but her very name was unknown in those waters, and none had seen a ship brigantine-rigged, with a carved Neptune figurehead. But the captain was not downcast. He reckoned on getting information from Hop Li, who, in his capacity as a merchant, usually knew whatever ship was afloat within five hundred miles of his home city.

Barely two months after leaving Apia, the *Watchman* crept along the deep Saigon river for the thirty odd miles that divides the city from the sea. The schooner, arriving at Saigon, tied up to one of the bamboo platform wharves, for the well-built jetties were not for such small sailing craft, being reserved for the steamers from all the world that plied back and forth.

The captain chose to go ashore alone and visit his Chinese friend; and he left "Long" Charley to take Hunter, who had never been in the city before, round the streets and the modern shops, while he caught the tram and went along the broad three-mile road to Cholon where Hop Li lived.

The Chinaman was nothing if not modern in every way, from the low stone building his extensive offices occupied, housing dozens of bustling stenographers and clerks, both of French and native birth, to the immaculate ducks he personally affected and wore at all times when in Cholon, European fashion.

The captain walked into the cool offices, and sent his name in to Hop Li by a

chubby-faced Chinese boy, and he was instantly ushered into a cool, secluded back room where the wealthy merchant conducted his purely private and personal affairs. The wide windows were shaded by green cane screens, electric fans hummed in every corner, and water percolated in soothing drips from the narrow spout of an ice-jar set on a low bamboo table. Desk and chairs and files, all were the latest models, and it was not until one looked closely through the dim light at the huge, somewhat round-shouldered figure that rose to greet the captain that one realized he was indeed of Oriental birth. His large white teeth showed in a smile, creasing his faintly yellow face.

"It is two—no, four years since you came, is it not?" he asked pleasantly, shaking hands as he spoke. His English was very nearly perfect, as was his French and German, when he talked in those tongues. It was evident he was pleased to see the captain.

The captain smiled and nodded. He had once done Hop Li a very great favour indeed, and he knew that the Chinaman would do his best to pay the as yet unpaid debt. He plunged into the business with an abruptness that was rude for the East. But Hop Li understood and only smiled.

"Do you know Sing Loo?"

The change that came over the giant merchant was remarkable. The smile vanished from his face, and his somewhat fleshy ridged cheeks went flat and impassive. From the almond eyes a dull light flickered, and then disappeared. Hop Li leaned forward in his swivel chair, and gripped the curved arms with tense hands. The mask was upon him, and his inner self was hidden.

"And why does my friend wish to know of Sing Loo?" he whispered somewhat harshly, his teeth showing slightly from between his thick lips. The captain looked at him curiously, and wondered what unknown wells he had stirred with his question. He spoke guardedly. One never knew with a Chinaman, even if one claimed him as a friend. Speaking crisply, somewhat curtly, the captain told the tale of the *Flying Fish* and of Standing, the renegade mate, sometime known as Big Bill Harris, partner to Sing Loo, the wrecker of the China Seas. When he had done, Hop Li, who had never moved

all through the recital, sat back with a sigh, and hid his face in the shadow that one of the green screens cast almost imperceptibly across the room and the swivel chair. For a long time he was silent. Nor did he move until he spoke. He sighed again, with relief, as though some decision had been reached after a long struggle.

"My friend," he commenced abruptly, "for the sake of that which we know lies between us I must aid you. Sing Loo is a strange man; I hardly know—myself—how strange. There is a price on his head, and his haunts are secret. But enough. You tell me you lifted this man Standing from a penniless beachcomber in Australia—Perth, you said, did you not?—to be mate of your ship. You tell me he returned the compliment by attempting to kill you and by stealing your ship. I happen to know that what you say is true—not that I should doubt you, anyway. Your eyes do not lie, and your mouth is firm as that of a man. . . . I have agents, you understand? who tell me little things the birds whisper to them. Big Bill Harris has returned to the seas of China again, and he has joined his comrade, Sing Loo. He returned two weeks ago."

For a while Hop Li was silent, until the captain began to fidget with his sun-helmet on his knee and wonder what was coming next. He felt that he was like a man who treads the edge of a vast abyss, seething with unseen, monstrous things, the presence of which he was only half aware. He coughed slightly and waited.

"There is nothing less than ingratitude," resumed Hop Li, after a while. "To you I hold gratitude for the thing that occurred so long ago. This Standing, or Harris, has betrayed his. There is nothing less—nothing less." Hop Li sighed as though he saw into the future and the past. His voice was timbreless, heavy with certitude. "What is it is written on the back of the Golden Image in the Temple of Light? *'There is no man, however strong he may be, who will not find someone with greater strength to cast him to the ground.'* Although what I say you will not understand for a while, I tell you, my friend, that this mate of yours has run into a circumstance that is at last too strong for him, as strange as it is rare. Rest content, you

shall have your ship, and the man shall be handed over to you." He looked around the cool office very slowly, as though seeking for eavesdroppers. He sighed again, like a man vastly relieved. "All this shall be done for gratitude."

Hop Li breathed quickly, as though he had just passed from under a cold shower of water. His eyes dropped to the white square of the blotter on the desk before him, and he ran his tongue across his lips.

"If Sing Loo were here—were here," he whispered, "his life would not be worth an instant's purchase."

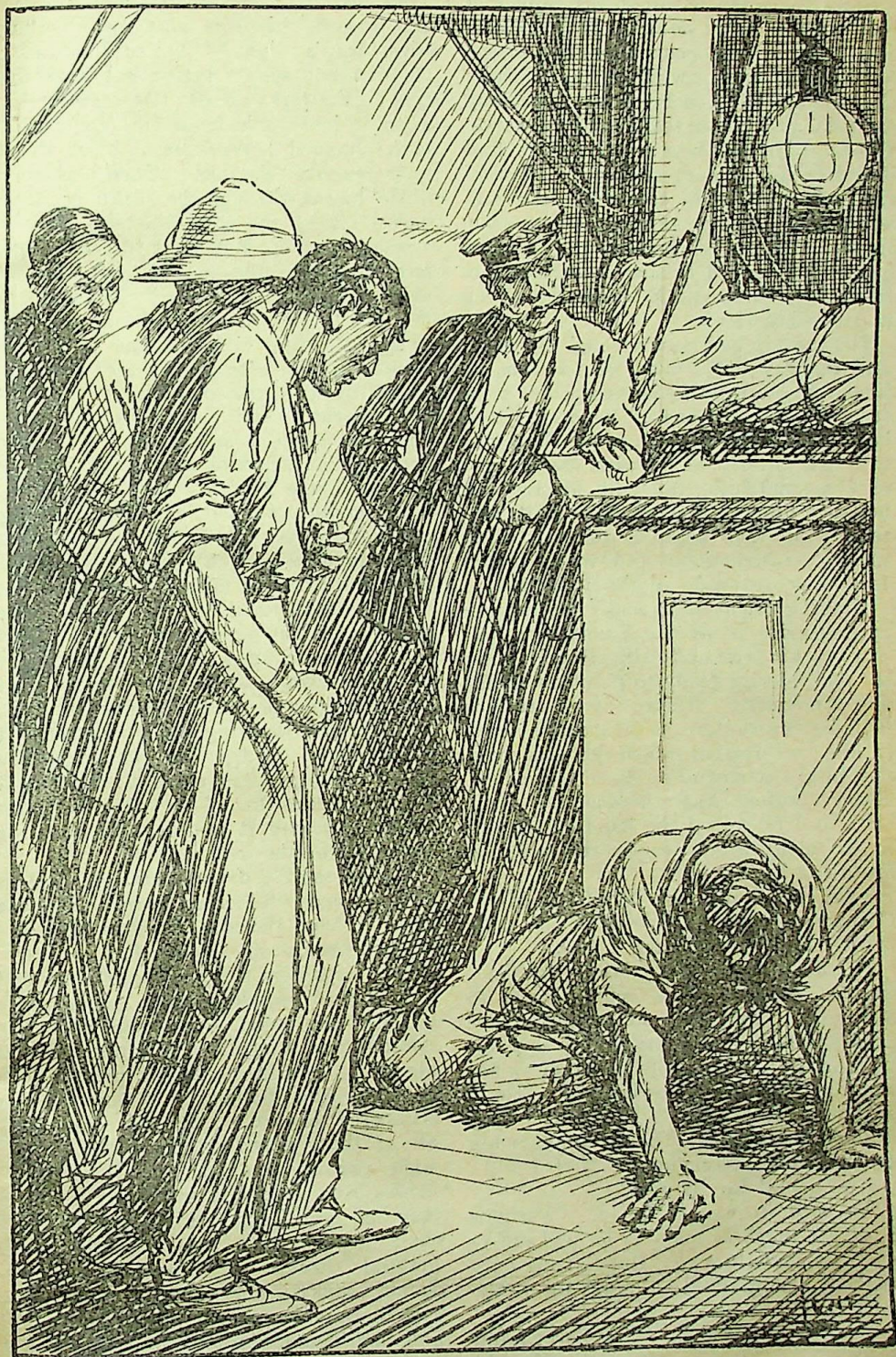
He recovered suddenly and sat up. He was the genial, smiling merchant again.

"Never ask questions when Fate runs with you," he cautioned. "A wise man also keeps his lips closed over matters which he may guess, but does not understand. By the wharves in Saigon you will find the junk *Hoang-Ho*. Be on board at sunset—alone. I shall not see you again, for I go north to-morrow."

He rose and held out his hand, and before the bewildered captain could think of anything to say he found himself on the pavement waiting for the tram.

The mystery of the East struck the captain with full force. He was aware that he had run against something greater than he had thought for in questioning about Sing Loo, the wrecker, reputed pirate. Who was he? What was there about him, what connexion had he with Hop Li, to make the merchant act so strangely? The captain thought he had known the Chinaman, but he began to reconsider his knowledge. He gave the problem up after a while, and sat back to watch the shops and houses sliding past. The main thing was to trust in Hop Li, and be aboard the junk at sunset. He would take his revolver though, and he would leave word with "Long" Charley and Hunter where he was going. One never knew in China.

The light-blue silk clothed figure, on the junk's high poop beside the captain, raised a skinny arm and pointed ahead and away on the port bow. "See! Singora Light over there. Him fixed on Point Koh Ngu," he lisped softly. The captain watched the light flicker and twinkle like a great star through the deepening dusk that crept over the Gulf of Siam.



Even the hardened "Long" Charley, who had something of a reputation himself, admitted it was "some go"

Since the previous night the junk had been sailing lazily onward, assisted now and then by the coolies midships who handled the long, awkward sweeps from the fore-and-aft benches that ran along the side, just below the carved bulwarks. The captain had been surprised to find that Hop Li was not aboard the *Hoang-Ho*, but the strange creature, little and wizened, in the blue-silk costume, answering to the name of Sammy, had accosted him as he stepped aboard and taken him in charge, so to speak, evidently acting under instructions.

The captain had gone through the night and the day like a man in a dream, or like a spectator who looks upon a scene from afar, conscious of being with it heart and soul, but not of it. The captain felt utterly alone with the Chinese crew around him, and only his revolver between himself and death should they take it into their heads to disregard their master's instructions, and rob him and leave him drowning in the warm sea.

Nothing occurred to make the captain apprehensive however. Sammy was always at his beck and call, always within ear-shot, always ready to point out lights and landmarks. There was no fruit or delicacy the captain could mention, even in idle conversation, which the junk could not, at the command of Sammy, produce. Every comfort was afforded the white man, and he sensed the hand of Hop Li in the many attentions he received that made for his ease.

"Yes, on Point Koh Ngu," lisped the Chinaman again. "We shall be there in one, maybe two hours, I tink."

"I know; but where? Where the devil are we going? This course leads to Bangkok. Two English steamers have passed us to-day, and one French ship, all heading the way opposite to which we are heading. They were carrying teak; I could see the deck cargoes. They must have come from Bangkok. There's no other big steamer port hereabouts, is there? . . . Are we bound for Bangkok?"

The captain was irritated. Perhaps the slight touch of malaria he was suffering from made him so. But Sammy only laughed, and glanced sideways up at the white man.

"We not go Bangkok. You never mind where we go. Best you forget. Hop Li says he tell you not ask questions, also keep lips very much closed."

The captain checked the angry words that rose to his lips and sighed. "By Jove, that's right!" he said moodily. He did not speak again, but fixed his eyes on the light ahead. He noticed that when it had sunk from view astern the junk changed her course to port by at least twenty degrees. Then, after a while, he saw through the darkness ahead, barely lit by the starshine, the loom of a small island. But what interested him more than the presence of land were the ships riding at anchor off the island on the side they were approaching, each carrying a riding light on the mainmast. Crafts of all sorts were there, from the unwieldy two-masted junk to the slim Malay prau. And, among the rest, above the rest, towered the graceful sides and the tapering masts of the fastest sailer in the south, the *Flying Fish*!

The captain walked, a trifle unsteadily perhaps, to the junk's side and gripped the carved rail of the poop. His ship! How much he had missed her he had not even guessed until he saw her in the gloom of night surrounded by the very scum of the Siamese Gulf, at the mercy of infidels who did not even know what a good ship was when they possessed it.

He forgot Standing for a moment. It was good, so good, to see the brigantine after so many weary months. He would take good care that if ever she was taken from him again it would be by death or the anger of the sea.

The *Hoang-Ho* dropped anchor, and in a smart, modern-looking launch that was lowered from the side, Sammy took the captain aboard the *Flying Fish*.

The brigantine's fo'c'sle ports for'ard were lighted up, as were the saloon ports beneath the poop deck, showing that someone was aboard. The launch rasped alongside 'midships where a pilot ladder dangled, and Sammy and the captain clambered aboard. Several Chinamen, all of them naked to the waist, armed with various weapons, but most with krises, rose from the main hatch where they had been lying talking together, and came towards the two invaders with lowered heads and searching eyes. Sammy spoke a few words in a low tone, and the advancing men instantly halted, and their hands went to their brows in a curious sort of salute. A few more words, and they fell in the wake of the newcomers as they made their way on to the

poop, and clattered down the saloon companion to the saloon below.

Standing was entertaining royally. The table was thronged with bottles and glasses, the white cloth stained with spilt wine. There was fruit, meats and vegetable galore. There were also men, the majority of them the commanders of the surrounding junks and praus, and women—slant-eyed, painted women. Nearly all were drunk, and the saloon was in indescribable confusion. The whole was lit by the soft light from the gimbal lamps screwed in the deck-head.

Standing, seated in the captain's chair at the after end of the table, was just raising a glass to his lips, when his hand was arrested as by some invisible bar. The wine trickled unheeded on his shirt. His mouth gaped, and his heavy, blackly unshaven face was tense with astonishment. His eyes widened, and the sheen of the drink in them faltered and died, leaving them frightened and sober-looking. One does not murder a man off Samoa, and expect to see him in the Gulf of Siam!

The captain pushed Sammy aside, stepped clear of the companion, and took one stride toward the table. The assembled company turned their heads one by one, aware that something was toward, and grew sober. The laughter and the jumble of tongues died, the glasses ceased to tinkle. Across the length of the table Standing faced the captain. No one noticed Sammy for the time.

"You! You!" Standing licked his suddenly dry lips. The woman who sat on his lap laughed sillily, and he brushed her away without looking at her. The glass he held crashed with a tinkle to the carpet of the deck. There was silence. No one breathed, but everyone waited.

"Rather a surprise, Standing," observed the captain coldly. "I have come for the *Flying Fish* and for you. Anything to say?"

The other rose slowly from his chair, disclosing his belt and holster strapped about him, and ran a shaking hand across his eyes. They bulged in their sockets.

"You!" he almost screamed. "You're dead! . . . How did you get here?"

Sammy pushed his way politely forward. The instant he came into the full lamplight the assembled junk captains and the masters of praus rose to their feet

and made the same curious salute the yellow man on deck had done. Sammy said something in his native tongue, a few short words, orders it seemed, and immediately the men stepped away from the table and, drunk or sober, made for the companion and the deck without a word, casting curious glances at the captain and the astonished Standing. The painted women crept after the men. Except for Sammy and the other two the saloon was empty.

"Speak, can't yer?" screamed the mate.

The captain walked the length of the table towards him, his eyes cold and hard, and his lean body tensed with control. Standing edged clear of his chair and met him, one hand at his own working throat, the other out as though to fend off an apparition.

"I was not drowned that night off Samoa," said the captain brusquely. "Neither was Hunter. That's all. . . . Now, I've come for my ship and you."

"Not drowned!" There was relief, almost gladness, in the mate's voice. He removed the hand from his throat slowly and dropped it on his revolver. Sammy edged along the table and watched.

The mate recovered his nerve with astonishing rapidity. He laughed a little shakily, and spat at the captain's feet. "Well, what you going to do about it? I'm among friends here." He looked around and realized suddenly that his friends had gone. He snarled.

"Huh! Bribed 'em, eh? By thunder, Hawke, you can't put anything over on me!" He whipped out his revolver, and Sammy, reaching across the chair, smashed a full bottle of expensive wine across his wrist with a lisp, "No shoot here, smash furniture."

The revolver thudded to the carpet and the captain kicked it contemptuously aside. Then his control snapped. He looked round on the saloon that had been the envy of the Pacific, on the ruined carpets and the scarred woodwork, on the choice wines opened to feed the scum of the Gulf, and his fist went out as his head came back to face the mate. It knocked the heavier man back a trifle, but did not land square enough on the jaw to quieten him. Sammy calmly picked up another full bottle of wine and smashed it over the snarling mate as he was preparing to rush. He dropped with a groan, and the Chinaman lowered him into a chair.

"Hop Li says you not to be hurt. This man too big for you. You shoot him if you like."

The captain recovered his temper and shook his head. "I'll tie him up and pitch him in one of the cabins, then we'll see about working the old *Flying Fish* down to Saigon. I've got some extra men on the *Watchman*, she's the ship I came west in. Can you get me a crew for a few days?"

Sammy nodded eloquently and made a motion towards the companion. The captain nodded and went up on deck, followed by the Chinaman. As he stepped clear of the hatchway and out on to the poop a thought seemed to strike him. He wondered why it had not done so before. Everything, every word Sammy had spoken since leaving Saigon, every word Hop Li had spoken, pointed to the one inevitable conclusion. The captain turned and faced the Chinaman.

"Hop Li is——"

The Chinaman reached out a skinny hand and pressed the captain's arm, but he could not check the captain's words.

"Sing Loo!"

"Hop Li says you keep lips very much closed and you not ask questions too much," the other lisped rapidly. Then he brushed past the captain and walked to the foreward taffrail, from whence he called a man to come and bind up the mate in the saloon below. Then he lisped out orders concerning the anchor and the sails. Half a dozen praus surged alongside for lines to warp the brigantine clear of the surrounding ships.

The captain stood dazed with the shock of his own discovery. No wonder Hop Li had changed so abruptly at the sudden mention of Sing Loo's name. He must have thought the captain knew! The struggle with him was, of course, whether he should betray his old partner Standing, who would, in that event, betray him, unless he had him killed; whether he should repay his ancient debt to the captain by returning his ship, or whether he should aid Standing in getting away. No wonder Hop Li had insisted that ingratitude was one of the lowest of things. Doubtless the man, like all Chinamen, had his own peculiar code of honour. The exact forces which must have swept him in the little office in Cholon would have been guessed at. He was flying into retreat, going north, until

he was assured he was safe. The captain nodded thoughtfully to himself as he watched the stumpy junk masts slipping by through the night, and felt the well-remembered deck quiver under his feet again. He felt a moment's regret for the Samoan crew. They had been abandoned in one of the Malay villages by Standing and had thrown in their lot with the coast fishermen, so Sammy had told when asked earlier in the day. Too bad, thought the captain.

Not having any papers, and not wishing to go through a rigmarole of red tape, for the French can be very officious at times, the captain did not run the *Flying Fish* into Saigon. He went up to the city in the *Hoang-Ho*, and boarding the *Watchman* gave instant orders for sailing, which, however, he postponed for a while. He had Standing smuggled aboard under the cover of dusk, and Sammy obligingly agreed to come with him and witness the fun.

The *Watchman's* decks were spacious enough, and two or three hurricane lamps gave sufficient light. The bamboo wharves were deserted by dark. The somewhat puzzled Hunter and "Long" Charley stood by while the captain cut Standing's bonds. The mate staggered to his feet and glared around on the four intent faces—that of "Long" Charley, his old partner, sneering cynically with resurrected memories, that of Hunter dark with suppressed passion and eagerness, that of the captain stern and set, heavily frowning, and that of Sammy impassive, but yet mildly curious at what the queer white devils were going to do.

"Hunter," the captain rasped, "this man attempted to murder you, do you want to thrash him? I'd give the rest of my life to be able to, but he's too husky for me. I'm an old man, and you're young. If you don't lick him you're fired!"

"Long" Charley neighed like a horse, and flung off his battered sun helmet. His Adam's apple ran up and down his throat as he took a pace forward and stretched a scrawny arm out straight in front of him towards Standing.

"I kinda think I'd like to lick him m'self," he said. "Seems I'm bothered about a little affair in Cossack. Remember it, Buck?"

"Go t' hell," snarled the burly mate,

his arms dangling with clenched fists like a gorilla's. He was hatless and dirty, and he looked very formidable. "What you aiming t' do, Hawke?" he demanded, turning on the captain. "What you aiming t' do?"

Hunter stripped off his coat quickly and pushed "Long" Charley aside. "This is my affair, Charley," he muttered. "Put up your hands, Standing! If I can't lick you I'm going to kill myself trying!"

The mate swung sullenly towards him, and then looked back at the captain. "And what's going to happen after I've licked this pup?"

The captain hesitated. It had been in his mind to hand the mate over to the authorities after all, but he felt somewhat softened now he had back the *Flying Fish*. Sammy leant and whispered something in his ear, and the captain slowly grinned.

"I'll let you go. I'll kick you off my ship, for I think you've had a lesson, or will have had by the time Hunter gets done."

The mate asked nothing more. The pent-up rage at being checkmated that had been boiling within him burst to the surface. He flung himself on the waiting Hunter with a snarl and bored into the fight. It did not last long, perhaps for ten minutes, and the captain said afterwards that it was the fastest, bloodiest thing he had ever seen. Even the hardened "Long" Charley, who had something of a reputation himself, admitted it was "some go."

Standing was by far the stronger man, but Hunter was the younger and the cleaner lived. Also he was not very weak himself. And, more important than all, he was driven on by a rage that made him impervious to blows and exhaustion. He remembered the horror of the sea after he had been battered by the belaying-pin wrapped in burlap and flung overboard.

At the end of ten minutes Standing lay a crumpled heap in the scuppers, bruised, helpless and sobbing to himself, while Hunter, in a not much better condition, was supported by "Long" Charley's arm, but still capable of hitting another blow or two, which Standing certainly was not.

The captain was grinning, and his good humour, so long absent, had returned. "Long" Charley was smiling sweetly as he gazed on the quivering heap that had been a vicious strong man a few minutes before. He was thinking of Cossack.

Even the Chinaman was smiling a little. Hunter was aware of a grim satisfaction as he struggled for his breath.

"Send two coolies aboard for him when you go ashore, Sammy," said the captain with a wink.

Sammy bobbed and nodded, and with a muttered word of farewell was gone down the gang-plank. Ten minutes later two yellow-skinned, half-naked coolies came silently aboard, and lifting the still groaning mate carried him ashore and into the darkness of the bamboo wharves. The captain chuckled as he turned and led the way to the poop.

"Where they taking 'im?" queried "Long" Charley, sensing something in the wind as he half carried Hunter.

The captain chuckled again.

"Sammy, that's the Chink, suggested that he knew a gentleman who wanted a strong coolie for a couple of months' work in the rice fields of the interior. I made sure it was just for a couple of months. The work will do Standing good."

"Long" Charley's neigh of laughter woke the echoes, and even the battered Hunter could not forbear to grin.

"We sail now," resumed the captain, as he made to mount the low poop companion. "The *Flying Fish* is waiting outside. The junk I came in on is going with us, and she'll bring back the crew the brigantine's got aboard now as soon as we send our own on. You can take the *Watchman* back to Apia, Hunter. I'll work my own ship. Charley, you'll come with me. . . . Some day," went on the captain after a moment's pause, as he commenced walking aft, "I'll tell the pair of you about my adventures the past two days, all except one little matter. . . . I've learnt something too, Charley. How's this? 'Never ask questions when Fate runs with you,' and 'a wise man keeps his lips closed.' Good, eh?"

"Not bad," grunted the thin one, staring away into the murk of the river where a brilliantly lighted French liner was picking her way. "But what about my guano island up north?"

"Oh, confound your guano island," snapped the captain. Then he laughed. "We'll look it over, old man, as soon as I can get the *Flying Fish* cleaned up and in shape again. . . . Call the hands to stand by. . . . Hunter, sit down on the skylight until you feel better. That was a whale of a licking you handed Standing!"

THE FACTOTUM

By WILLIAM LE QUEUX

III.—A SLIP OF THE PEN

TWO months after my experiences with the Langleys, I found myself acting as secretary and right-hand man to Mr. Simon Frankfort. This gentleman was a specimen of the genus known as "financier."

My new employer was decidedly personable, a big man, clean-shaven, cheery of voice, agreeable in manner, diffusing geniality and good nature with his radiant and agreeable presence. But it did not take me long to discover that in business deals he was hard and grasping, and ready to take full advantage of the other party.

In private life, however, he was generous; more than generous, foolishly lavish.

I had left the Langleys for two reasons. For one thing, Mr. Albury knew Frankfort very well, and had a certain admiration for him as a successful man of business, although my old friend was far too cautious to put any of his carefully guarded capital into the financier's numerous schemes. Hearing that Frankfort was looking out for a secretary to replace one who had just left him, and knowing my aptitude for figures, he suggested me as a fitting candidate for the post at double the salary I was getting.

The bold stroke succeeded, and a single interview with Frankfort settled the matter. As I had to make my way in the world, independent of sentiment, the mere increase in salary was sufficient justification for my quitting Langley's service.

There was another reason, quite apart from the business side. I was still very attached to this irresponsible couple, more especially to the brave little wife who was helping so vigorously and wholeheartedly in the task of reconstruction of their shattered finances. Still, with the husband, my feelings had undergone a change. In a way I pitied him, but thinking it over in cold blood I could not but entertain a strong detestation of his weak-

ness in yielding to Drayton, of disgust at his abuse of the confidence reposed in him by his superiors.

In our subsequent intercourse, in which no allusion was ever made to the events of that terrible night when he had sold a precious Government secret, I was unable to keep out of my manner a certain coldness of which he must have been as much aware as I was.

There was a certain embarrassment in his manner when we said good-bye, of which I shrewdly guessed the cause. He wanted to thank me for what I had done, but shame and remorse prevented him from putting his gratitude in words after the express silence I had enjoined upon him.

Frankfort occupied a suite of rooms at that last word in luxury, the Majestic Hotel. He had a beautiful drawing-room, a smaller apartment in which meals were served, and a room for business purposes, in which he hatched his schemes and received his financial friends.

He was married to a woman some ten years his junior, he being in the early forties. She was rather a sad-looking person, and I shrewdly suspected that the life of her adventurous husband had been one of ups and downs, and that the memories of adversity had remained longer with her than those of prosperity. He was very generous to her, always surprising her with presents more or less costly, but I never could discover that they produced in her any particular elation. I would not have described her as exactly a cold woman, her attitude as regards life seemed to be one of placid and almost stoical indifference.

For some little time she did not vouchsafe to hold much intercourse with me, but by degrees she thawed in her manner; and one day when we were lunching alone in her husband's absence—for I always was treated as their equal and partook of their meals—she abandoned her usual

reserve and let me see a little into her real feelings.

I was getting up to go to Frankfort's business room, after we had finished lunch, when she made an arresting gesture.

"Don't go for a minute or two, Mr. Overton, I know you are not very busy just now." She pushed the cigarette box towards me. "Have another smoke and tell me how you like your new post."

I answered frankly that I liked it very much, that there was a certain excitement about it which appealed to my temperament.

"Ah, the air of speculation suits you, the uncertainty, the following up of chances! For myself"—she spoke here with extraordinary vehemence—"I loathe it. I would sooner live in a tiny house on an assured income than in this magnificent suite"—she indulged in a disdainful gesture—"with all the attendant worries and uncertainties."

I must own that at the time I thought her rather fanciful and unjustifiably discontented. I had seen enough now to know that Frankfort was not by any means in the front rank of financiers, but I knew he was making a very considerable income; as to what became of it, I was in the dark. I wrote out his business cheques and kept his business books, but he kept his own private cheque and cash book under lock and key, and made all entries himself.

I was to receive enlightenment on this point from his wife in the next words she spoke. She must have seen that I had been a little startled by her vehement denunciation of her husband's business.

"If Mr. Frankfort were a different man, using the present apparent prosperity as a means to an end, I should probably be a much more contented woman than I am. But as a business man, as his flatterers and hangers-on declare him to be, he lacks the most important quality of a man of business, the instinct of self-preservation."

I was genuinely startled this time. Was it possible that he was living for the present, taking no thought of the morrow?" I put the question to her in those very words.

She nodded, with an expression almost of contempt upon her handsome features.

"You have described it exactly, Mr. Overton."

"But surely he has made some provision for you in case of accidents?" I hazarded.

She indulged in a little hard laugh. "My brother, who is a hard-working solicitor with very little belief in speculative pursuits, got hold of him when he was in a persuadable mood and made him settle four thousand pounds on me, on the understanding that the capital should never be disturbed on any pretext whatever. That was in the first year of our marriage, five years ago. And from that day to this, I know for a fact he has never put by another sixpence."

I was astonished at such extraordinary want of foresight, and said as much, expressing my sympathy with her in no measured terms.

My genuine commiseration heartened her to further confidences, and I learned things that astonished me with regard to the career of my latest employer.

"We have been married over five years, and always lived in this sort of way, except when we had our bad times. Three times, in those five years, he has been broke to the world and got up again. The day will come when he will be broke for the last time, when he won't get up again. We shall then have to live in some cheap place abroad on the interest of the money my brother made him settle on me, and he will eat his heart out."

"Have you no influence over him?" I asked. "Cannot you persuade him to give you a good allowance, out of which you could form a comfortable little nest-egg. Pardon me for saying I have observed he spends a great deal of money on you in presents."

She shrugged her shoulders. "That is his way. He is very fond of me, I believe, but I cannot influence him a scrap. Ask him for a costly fur coat, an expensive ring, and he will take you at once to choose it. Ask him for a five-pound note, and it will be a week before he gives it to you. That is his way."

No wonder she was a miserable woman in the midst of all this luxury, and consumed with the torturing thought that any day poverty might take its place.

"I told you that three times since we have been married he has come to his last farthing. It was fortunate for him that he did give me those expensive things, for on each occasion they had to go to set him on his legs again. A bad time will come sooner or later, and what

I have now will have to go for the same purpose. If he had given me money instead, I would have taken it to my brother and had it put beyond his reach, so far as the capital was concerned. It would have been much better for him in the end. He would have given up this vile business for one which could be relied on to bring in a small but steady income."

Learning of his three reverses, I was not so enamoured of the financing business as I had been.

Still, with the usual vanity that assails people in criticizing the methods of their friends, I thought I should have shown a little more common sense had I been in Frankfort's position. He always maintained to me, when he occasionally touched on these topics, that to men in a certain position show and display were absolutely necessary. The world, he maintained, usually took you at your own valuation. If you showed them that you could make money for yourself they would believe you could make money for them.

In the last conversation I had with him on the subject, he had alluded to a certain dinner he had given the night before in the big dining-room at the hotel.

"I can tell you're an economical sort of chap, Overton, by certain signs and symptoms," he had said to me. "Quite right, my boy, always start with economical ideas, don't throw them overboard till circumstances demand it! Now that dinner last night cost me over seventy pounds. My wife would say it was a reckless waste of money; you might think the same, although I noticed you enjoyed it pretty well. I asked twenty people to make a show, to fill the stage, but in a sense the nineteen were useless to me. I gave that dinner for one man, a slow, cautious chap I couldn't bring to the point. It settled him; the next day he was on the list of my backers. He would follow me anywhere. Seventy pounds! A waste of money, say you and my wife; I say—a sprat to catch a whale!"

The first two months I was there, business was very brisk. Large sums of money passed through his hands, out of which he transferred a considerable amount to that private account of which I never knew the details. Many handsome gifts, in kind, were showered upon Mrs. Frankfort, who appeared to receive them with her usual placid indifference.

The next three months were very lean ones. There was no doubt things were stagnant. The slow cautious man for whom he had given that seventy pound dinner did not now appear ready to follow him anywhere. It seemed to me, from his letters, that he was conspicuously hanging back. And I did not fancy that at the moment Frankfort was in a pecuniary position to throw any more sprats.

There was plenty of time for me to reflect over my experiences during the short time I had been earning my own living, and I was certainly being made acquainted with the seamy side of life. I had been in three posts and about the three there had been an abnormal atmosphere. Vanstone, prosperous to outward seeming, but carrying with him the ghastly secret of his former misdeeds. Poor weak Langley, steeped in debt and difficulties, driven to dishonour to avoid the consequences of his folly. And now this genial, burly Frankfort, scattering money lavishly one week, and selling his wife's trinkets the next to obtain food and lodging. Surely some day I should drop anchor in some quiet and peaceful harbour.

Not that I had anything to complain of, from the monetary point of view, in this my last post. Frankfort was, as I have said before, a very generous man, and twice, during the prosperous period, had supplemented my salary with a couple of handsome cheques, as a reward for some suggestions I had given him in the course of his business.

I had a second conversation with Mrs. Frankfort, which left a painful impression upon me. She came into the "work-room," as we called it, one day when my employer had gone to interview one of his reluctant capitalists, and fired at me an abrupt question.

"Things are very bad, aren't they?"

I told her that I knew nothing of her husband's private resources, but so far as the business was concerned, no money had come in for some time.

She spoke quite composedly, but there was the bitterness in her voice which characterized all her references to what she had previously termed "this vile business."

"There is no reason why I shouldn't be frank with you. If you don't know everything now, you will have to know it

presently. He is great on what he calls 'keeping his end up.' He is doing that with you—much you know, much more you can guess. He is on the rocks again. He has emptied one of my jewel cases to-day to keep things going; he is heavily in debt to the hotel. I would be thankful if this were the last of it, and we could go away and live in peace on my small income. It is killing me, and he feeds on it. He has got a wild scheme of going to Paris and pulling off something there. What is the use of it all, just delaying the inevitable end?"

Things were coming to a crisis quicker than I expected. The next day Frankfort abandoned his policy of reserve about his private matters and told me he was in a tight corner.

"I'm wasting time here, my boy," he said candidly. "My particular lot are in a blue funk, and I can't bring them up to the scratch; I'm bound to say they have had one or two facers lately which have put the wind up them. I'm going over to Paris, where I can bring off a sure thing. The devil of it is, how to get away from here. I've got a few pounds left, but I must keep them for the sinews of war, and I owe the hotel people a tidy sum. I'd better have the manager up, make a clean breast of it, and get the best terms I can."

He rang the bell and demanded the manager. I could not but admire him for his moral courage in facing the music.

To this functionary, a suave but very business-like person, he explained the situation. His proposition was to march away with all the honours of war, his bag and baggage intact, and settle the hotel bill when he returned from a flying visit to Paris.

The manager was suave but determined. He would do anything to oblige such a valued customer, but he was the servant of the company, and it was more than his place was worth, etc., etc. Result, a compromise. The hotel bill need not be paid, but Mrs. Frankfort must leave behind her trunks containing valuable clothes and furs as security.

It was Hobson's choice. Poor Frankfort, wearing now a very crestfallen look, had to go to his wife and break the news. As I was not present at the painful interview, I cannot say how the long suffering lady comported herself. She

carried away the next morning a few necessary garments and a fair amount of rings on her fingers, on which the kindly-hearted manager made no claim.

During the journey to Paris, Frankfort was very subdued, one might almost have imagined he was repenting his folly. He announced his intention of staying at a small and cheap hotel.

He turned to his wife. "You remember, Nancy, we stayed there in the year following our marriage."

"I remember it perfectly," was Mrs. Frankfort's answer. "In those days you had some common sense. I shall be glad to stay there now."

As he drew nearer to Paris, it was evident his thoughts were expanding with his prospects in that capital.

"I'm not sure that it would be wise to go to that third-rate place," he murmured in a tone loud enough to reach our ears. "I have to be in touch with some very important people who will judge by appearances. We had better go to a first-class hotel and economise there. We can live out most of the time and save that way. I know the ropes well; you can live for next to nothing in Paris."

The idea of Frankfort living on next to nothing anywhere was farcical, but his wife spoke no word, and I did not feel it was my place to utter any protest.

We drove up to the door of one of the most expensive hotels in Paris, where Frankfort had often stayed. The booking clerk knew him well and greeted him cordially.

To do him justice my employer began in a very modest way. "Just making a short stay here, a double room, a single one for my secretary, take our meals in the restaurant."

The booking clerk lifted his eyebrows. "I have got a charming little suite that would just suit you, Monsieur Frankfort, I can let you have it very cheap, too."

Frankfort lowered his voice, but I could still hear him.

"What do you call cheap? It is a flying visit, remember, and I don't want to spend much on it."

The clerk named a price for the week that would absorb about a quarter of the money Frankfort had drawn out from the bank, all the cash he had in the world. But the lure was irresistible. The suite was taken and I followed him up the

stairs, as he explained laboriously to his wife that it was very cheap, and that in view of the business he had in hand, it was of the most vital importance "to keep his end up."

The poor woman shrugged her shoulders, but made no audible protest. My misgivings I kept to myself.

I am bound to say that on this occasion he scored. His persistent policy of a sprat to catch a whale was amply justified by the results of his fortnight's sojourn in Paris. By the end of that time he had pulled off his deal and netted five thousand pounds. He was evidently in a very pliable mood, for he yielded to his wife's entreaties to entrust a thousand to her keeping, in readiness for a rainy day.

We returned to the Majestic and settled up the overdue hotel bill. The manager looked rather shame-faced when he was paid the money. He made some rather halting references to his position as the servant of others, of his not having a free hand, and indulged in other platitudes suitable to the occasion. But Frankfort, who was singularly free from vindictiveness, cut him short in his apologies with a genial smile.

"You only did your duty, my good fellow. In your place I should have felt bound to act as you did. I bear no malice because you insisted upon something more substantial than my mere promise."

For the next six weeks he pegged away with great energy at the various schemes, most of them rather small ones, which had been left in abeyance on his departure for Paris. But he seemed to make no headway, his capitalists still fighting shy. Was this Paris haul going to be his last deal in the world of finance? It began to look like it. Nothing came in, in the shape of money, and although he appeared a trifle less lavish than he used to be his weekly expenditure was enormous.

His wife expressed her bitterness one day when we were alone. "So far as he is concerned, this game is finished," she said to me. "None of his schemes has ever had a genuine success, and he has let in so many people, that backers have begun to fight shy of him. If he had used some of that five thousand to embark in some legitimate, non-speculative business, he could have made a fresh start. He will hang on till every farthing of that

is gone, mark my words. Nothing ever has taught him wisdom, nothing ever will."

I began to think myself it would not be long before he would have to get from her that thousand pounds which she was hoarding so carefully for a rainy day.

At this period of my career, please remember, I was very young and prided myself on possessing a rather subtle knowledge of character, and I fancied that I had gauged Frankfort pretty accurately. I knew that in business he was mean, grasping, suspicious and far from scrupulous, while he displayed exactly opposite qualities in his private life. But I was quite certain that his unscrupulousness would always stop on the right side of the law; that he would never stoop to anything criminal. How very wrong I was in my estimate will be shown immediately.

Frankfort packed me off early one morning to one of his favourite capitalists who dwelt in a lordly pleasure-house at Guildford. I took down with me a memorandum of certain fresh facts and figures compiled for the purpose of overcoming the reluctance of this important person to enter fully into one of my employer's pet schemes.

The said capitalist was a most benevolent-looking old gentleman, with the face of a philanthropist, but behind that kindly exterior he hid a very shrewd brain and a remarkable capacity for looking after himself. He gave me a very good lunch, and discussed the facts and figures with me during the whole of the afternoon, but he still fought shy. I had been urged by Frankfort to extract from him a satisfactory message, but that he declined to give.

"No use pressing me, Mr. Overton," he said shaking his head with his usual benevolent smile. "Our good Frankfort is so plausible and such a terrible optimist. I have lost a few thousands over him already. I must sleep on all these rosy facts and figures; he shall hear from me in due course. Are you sure you won't stay to dinner?"

I was quite sure. I knew Frankfort was impatiently awaiting my return. He had counted a good deal on the effect of that carefully prepared document, and I had hung on there in the hope of getting something satisfactory out of the old gentleman.

It was about half-past seven when I got



“What do you call cheap?”

back to the Majestic; they usually dined at seven; they would be in the middle of dinner. I went into the dining-room—there was nobody there; I peeped in the business apartment—it was empty. I then tried the third room and saw Mrs. Frankfort on her knees filling up two big trunks. I felt at once that something unusual had happened.

"Where is your husband?" I cried.

She rose up from her occupation. Her face was deathly white, save for two spots of colour that burned in her cheeks.

"It is as well you were out of the way," she said in a harsh vibrating voice. "The game is up; this wretched business has come to an end sooner than I thought. They took him away at four o'clock this afternoon, by the back way to avoid scandal. I am stopping the night, by permission of the manager; I shall go the back way to-morrow morning to avoid being seen by those who will read in the morning's paper that my husband is a felon."

"Took him by the back way! Your husband a felon!" I gasped. "What does it all mean?"

"It means that he was arrested on a charge of forgery, and that there is no defence," she answered in the same harsh voice. "Sit down and I will tell you all about it. It has been hanging over him for the best part of the last three years, and if he had listened to me, he could have saved himself with the hundreds—nay, thousands, that he has thrown into the gutter."

The story, in spite of its tragedy, was a very simple one. At a time when he was hard pressed for money, Frankfort had been foolish and wicked enough to forge a bill of exchange for a thousand pounds on which he had put as acceptor the name of an old and rich client. He had borrowed money on this bill at his bank and had taken it up before maturity by paying cash. It seemed such an easy way of getting money that he had repeated the experiment at intervals of six months. He had blurred out the transaction to his wife in a moment of confidence, and yielding at last to her urgent entreaties, had promised only yesterday to redeem the bill out of what was left of the five thousand pounds earned at Paris.

But it seemed that by an unaccountable

oversight, a slip of the pen, there was a discrepancy of a trifling sum between the written amount and the figures on the bill, unnoticed at the time, but discovered later. The bank manager, perhaps grown suspicious of the frequently recurring transaction, had applied to the acceptor, who declared his signature to be a clever forgery. In such cases, banks are bound to prosecute, and a warrant was immediately issued for his arrest.

She told me all this in the same hard metallic voice in which she had first spoken. It seemed to me that she had very little sympathy for her husband.

I could not help thinking she was at bottom a hard woman, and contrasting her attitude with that of Mrs. Langley. When her husband had descended to the depths of moral turpitude, that angelic little soul had pillowed his head upon her breast and shown by that eloquent gesture that her love could survive shame and disgrace.

But perhaps Mrs. Frankfort had never really loved the man; had only married him because she had been dazzled by his prospects and had grown hard and bitter when she began to realize that her hopes of happiness were built upon sand.

I pressed my services upon her, and she refused them with the first touch of feeling she had shown.

"You have a very kind heart, Mr. Overton; it will get hardened in time like mine. I am very sorry that you have been connected with us, it can do no good to a young man on the threshold of his career, if it does not do you positive harm. But, thanks all the same, I can manage quite well by myself. I shall have my modest income to live on."

I felt she did not want to talk to me any further, and that it would be a relief to leave her alone. We exchanged a silent hand-shake, and she went on with the task of packing her trunks.

In due course, Frankfort was brought to trial and received a stiff sentence, there being no palliating circumstances. His career as a financier was over, and he went to join several of the fraternity already in prison.

Meantime I was again out of a berth, although owing to his spasmodic generosity, I had saved enough to keep the wolf from the door for some weeks.

(Next month: "A Wife from Nowhere.")

ADVENTUROUS MEMORIES

*Eight Months of
Newspaper Life*

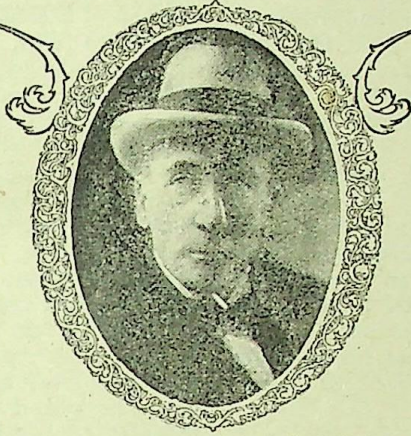


Photo: E. Brooke-Hughes

By ALGERNON
BLACKWOOD

TO my year and a half on the *New York Times* I look back with nothing but pleasure; the slogan "All the news that's fit to print" was practised, and the men I worked with were a good company of decent fellows. Muldoon, a fighting Irishman with a grim, fierce manner and a warm heart, had a sense of humour and a gift for encouraging his reporters that made them love him. Hours of work were from noon until the night assignment was turned in, which meant any time from ten o'clock onwards, though, as emergency man, in case of something happening late, I often had to stay in the office till after one in the morning. Proper food, a new suit, comradeship with a better class of men, came, perhaps, just in time for me. I remember the pleasure of writing home about my new post. I had a dress suit again. I saved \$15 a week.

Reporting for a New York newspaper can never be uneventful, but the painful incidents of life make deeper impressions than the pleasant ones. To meet the former means usually to call upon one's reserves, and memory hence retains sharper pictures of them corresponding to the greater effort. On the *Times* I was happy.

Two incidents stand out still in the mind, one creditable, pleasing to vanity, the other exactly the reverse. The latter, though it annoyed Muldoon keenly at the moment, fortunately for me appealed to his sense of humour too. He had given me an evening off—that is, all I had to do was to write a brief report of a students' concert in which his little niece was performing.

"Without straining veracity," he

mentioned, with a grin, "ye might perhaps say something kind and pretty about her!" He winked, whispering her name in my ear. "Have ye got it?" he asked fiercely. I nodded. Was

I thinking of something else at the moment? Was my mind in the woods that lovely evening in spring?

At the concert I picked out the name I remembered and wrote later a sturdy eulogistic notice of an atrocious performer, saying the very prettiest and nicest things I could think of, then went home to a coveted early bed. But Muldoon's grim smile next day, as I reported at his desk for an assignment, gave me warning that something was wrong. He did not keep me in suspense. I had selected for my praise, not only the crudest performer of the concert—that I already knew—but one whom all the other pupils disliked intensely, and whose name they particularly hoped would be omitted altogether. The niece I had not even mentioned.

The other incident that stands out after all these years was more creditable. Dr. Lyman Abbott, editor of the *Outlook*, which once Henry Ward Beecher edited as the *Church Union*, was preaching in Beecher's Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, a series of sermons on "The Theology of an Evolutionist," and Muldoon had persuaded the editor-in-chief that a full report on the front page every Monday would be a credit to the paper. His proposal was agreed to, apparently, without too much enthusiasm. The Irishman was determined to justify it. "I want ye to take it on," said Muldoon to me. "Ye can write shorthand. Make it one hundred and fifty." A column was

one hundred. To have a column and a half on the front page, if I could do it well, would be a feather in my cap. But my shorthand was poor, I was out of practice too, bad notes are impossible to read for transcription, and mistakes would mean angry letters of correction from Dr. Abbott probably.

Monday was my day off. I went to Plymouth Church with a new notebook and three soft-lead pencils, duly sharpened at both ends. In the brief interval before Sunday I practised hard. The church was packed to the roof as I sneaked up the aisle—an unfamiliar place, I felt it!—to a little table placed immediately beneath the pulpit. I came in after the service, but just in time for the sermon. There were no other reporters present.

Struggles with Shorthand

The "Theology of an Evolutionist" was an arduous assignment that strained every faculty I possessed, but indifferent shorthand lay at the root of the strain. Dr. Abbott's delivery was sure and steady, more rapid than it sounded. He never hesitated for a word; he never coughed, or cleared his throat, or even sneezed. There were none of those slight pauses which help a poor shorthand-writer to pick up valuable seconds. The stream of words poured on relentlessly, and the rate, I should judge, was two hundred and fifty a minute. Verbatim reporting was impossible to me. I had to condense as I went along, and to condense without losing sense and coherence was not easy. My pencil was always eight or ten words behind the words I actually listened to, and the Pitman outlines for the words I wrote down had to be recalled, while at the same time memory had to retain those being actually uttered at the moment. Being out of practice I often hesitated over an outline, losing fractions of a second each time I did so. These outlines come automatically, of course, to a good writer. Then there was the sense, the proportion, the relative values of argument and evidence to be considered—matters that could not be adjusted in the office afterwards, when there was barely time, in any case, to transcribe my notes before going to press. The interest I felt in the subject, moreover, delayed my

mind time and time again. Occasionally a pencil point would break as well, and turning it round in my hand meant important delay in a process where each fraction of a second counts. In the office afterwards each page transcribed was whipped away by a printers' devil before it could be reconsidered and re-read. I invariably went to bed after these evenings in church with a splitting headache. But the one hundred and fifty appeared duly on the front page every Monday morning, though whether good or bad I had no inkling. My impression, due to Muldoon's silence, was that my reports were hardly a success.

When the last of the long series came my opening report was confused and inaccurate owing to an announcement from the pulpit which embarrassed me absurdly. Dr. Abbott mentioned briefly that numerous requests to print the sermons had reached him, but that he did not propose to do so. He referred those interested, instead, to the reports in the *Times*, which, he took pleasure in saying, were excellent, accurate and as satisfactory as anything he could do himself. Being the only reporter present I felt conspicuous at my little table under the pulpit in the immense building. But I remember the pleasure too. It was an announcement I could use, was bound to use, indeed, in my own report next day. Muldoon would be pleased. On the Tuesday morning, when I appeared at his desk, he looked at me with such a fierce expression that I thought I was about to be dismissed. "Have ye been to your locker?" was all he said. In the locker, however, I found a letter from Dr. Abbott to the editor-in-chief, thanking him for the reports of the sermons, reports, he wrote, "whose brevity, accuracy and intelligence furnished a synopsis I could not have improved upon myself." He added, too, another important sentence: "By your reporter whom I do not know." It was not favouritism therefore. A brief chit to be handed to the cashier was in my locker too. My salary was raised to \$40 a week. The headaches had proved worth while.

Private Secretary to a Millionaire

The year and a half with the *Times* was a happy period, though long before it ended I had begun to feel my customary

weariness of the job, and a yearning for something new. The newspaper experience, which began with the *Evening Sun*, was exhausted for me. The pleasant and unpleasant sides of it I knew by heart. Though I took no action my mind began to cast about for other fields.

Events, moreover, which brought big changes into my life had always come, I noticed, from outside rather than as a result of definite action on my own part. A chance meeting in a hotel bar set me reporting, a chance meeting with Mullins landed me on the *Times*, a chance meeting with Angus Hamilton in Piccadilly Circus led to my writing books, a chance meeting with William E. Dodge now suddenly heaved me up another rung of life into the position of private secretary to a millionaire banker.

When by chance I found Mr. Dodge next me in a Broadway cable car, my first instinct was to slip out on to the outside platform before he had seen me, with, simultaneously, a hope that if he had seen me he would not recognize me. He was a friend of my father's. We had dined at his house on our first visit to New York, and once or twice since then our paths had crossed for a moment or two. He was a man of great influence, and of tireless philanthropy—a fine, just, high-minded personality. He stared hard at me. Before I could move he had spoken to me by name. "How was I getting along?" he inquired kindly, and did I "like New York"? What was I "doing at the moment"?

An Interview with Mr. James Speyer

I seized the opportunity, and told him of my longing to get out of newspaper work. He listened attentively; he examined me, I was aware, more than attentively. In the end he asked me to come and see him for a personal chat—not in his office, but in his house. He named a day and hour. An invitation to his office I should have disregarded. It was the kindness of "my house" that won me. But the interview was disappointing, rather embarrassing as well to me. He asked many personal questions about my life and habits; it was all very business-like and chilling. In the end he mentioned vaguely that James Speyer, of Speyer Brothers, was thinking, he believed, of engaging a secretary, and

that possibly—he could not say for certain—he might, when he next saw him, suggest my name for the post. "Of course," he added, still more cautiously, "you will understand I must make inquiries about you at the *Times*." He promised to let me know if anything further came of it. For many weeks I heard no word. Then I wrote. The reply asked me to call at his office. He was kindness and sympathy personified. "The *Times* gives you an excellent character," he informed me, "and say they will be sorry to lose you. I am sorry there has been this delay." He handed me a personal letter to James Speyer.

"Figures were my Idea of Hell"

James Speyer, brother of Edgar, later to become a baronet and member of the Privy Council, was what we called in New York a "white man." I hardly think I proved an ideal private secretary. His patience and kindness began at the first trial interview I had with him, when my shorthand—he dictated a newspaper financial paragraph full of unfamiliar terms—was not at its best, "not very grand" were the actual words he used. As for book-keeping, I told him frankly that "figures were my idea of hell," whereupon, after a moment's puzzled stare, he laughed and said that keeping accounts need not be among my principal duties. A clerk from the office could come up and balance the books every month. The phrase about hell, the grave expression of my face, he told me long afterwards, touched his sense of humour. The huge book in which I kept his personal accounts proved, none the less, a daily nightmare, with its nine columns for different kinds of expenditure—charities, housekeeping, presents, loans, personal, and the rest.

The first week in the job was a nervous one, though Mr. Speyer's tact and kind feeling soon put me at my ease. My desk at first was in a corner of an unused board-room in the bank, where I sat like a king answering countless letters on a typewriter. The shorthand was discarded; I composed the replies from verbal hints and general indications. Clerks treated me with respect, language was decent, surroundings were sumptuous; it was some time before I "found" myself.

James Speyer proved a good friend

during the two years or so I spent with him; he treated me as friend, too, rather than as secretary. My office was transferred to his palatial residence in Madison Avenue, a new house he had just built for himself, and it was part of my job to run this house for him, his country house at Irvington on the Hudson as well. These establishments, for a millionaire bachelor, were on a simple scale, though the amount of money necessary for one man's comforts staggered me at first. A married French couple were his chief servants—the woman as cook, the man as butler. They had been with him for a long time; they eyed the new secretary with disfavour; they were feathering their nests very comfortably, I soon discovered. My hotel experience in Toronto stood me in good stead here. But Mr. Speyer was a generous, live-and-let-live type of man who did not want a spirit of haggling over trifles in his home. I gradually adjusted matters by introducing a reasonable scale. The French couple and I became good friends.

When I dined alone with him in the luxurious panelled room I realized that life had indeed changed for me. His house, too, was filled with beautiful things. He had rare taste. His brother Edgar, whose English career had not yet begun, stayed with him on his periodical visits from Frankfurt. There was music then, big dinner-parties too, to which I was sometimes invited. Social amenities were not always quite easy, for the position of a Jew in New York "society" was delicate, but I never once knew James Speyer's taste or judgment at fault.

A Word in Praise of Jews

For Jews I have always had a quick feeling of sympathy, of admiration. I adore their intelligence, subtlety, keen love of beauty, their understanding, their wisdom. In the best of them lies some intuitive grip of ancient values, some artistic discernment, that fascinates me.

The happier period with James Speyer was, of course, an episode, like my other experiences. It was wonderful to draw a good salary regularly for pleasant work; to have long holidays in the Adirondacks, or moose-shooting in the woods north of the Canadian Pacific Railway; wonderful, too, when my employer went to Europe for three

months, to know myself in charge of such big interests, with a power of attorney to sign all cheques. But the usual restlessness was soon on me again; desire for a change stirred in my blood.

My sister, with her children, passed through New York about this time, returning from South Australia where her husband was governor, and it was at dinner in my employer's house, where he had invited them, that the longing to return to England suddenly declared itself. To find myself among relatives who called me by the unfamiliar childhood name woke English memories, English values, and brought back the English atmosphere once more.

Homeward-bound

I had felt that half a universe separated me from the world my relations lived in, but after they had gone I began to realize various things I had not realized before.

My detestation of the city both cleared and deepened. I began to understand more vividly, more objectively, the reasons for my feeling alien in it. I missed tradition, background, depth. There was a glittering smartness everywhere. The great ideal was to be sharper, smarter than your neighbour, above all things sharp and smart and furiously rapid, above all things—win the game. To be in a furious rush was to be intelligent, to do things slowly was to be derided.

I now realized how little I desired this speed and glittering brilliance, this frantic rush to be at all costs sharper, quicker, smarter than one's neighbour, to win the game at any price.

A few months later, just before I was thirty, I found myself in a second-class cabin in a Cunarder, with my savings in my pocket. I was glad when the Statue of Liberty lay finally below the sea, but I shall never forget the thrill of strange emotion I experienced when I first saw the blue rim of Ireland above the horizon a few days later. A shutter dropped behind me. I entered a totally new world. Life continued to be *mouvementée*, indeed, one adventure succeeding another, and ever with the feeling that a chance letter, a chance meeting, might open any morning a new chapter of quite a novel kind, but my American episodes were finished.

HORIZON OF GOD

An enthralling story of old Egypt, of Rebecca and Tutankhamen, by a master writer of romantic fiction.

By MAX PEMBERTON

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT KING PASSES

REBECCA, creeping from the camp of the Israelites to the rush-bound bank of the copper-faced river, watched the procession of boats go by and knew that the good King Akhnaton would reign no more in the City of the Horizon of God.

"And so," she would tell herself, "the dream was at an end; and the children of Jehovah might hope no more."

For this King had believed, even as they, in the Most High and in none other; and for his faith he had abandoned even his Kingdom to the Syrian and the Philistine. No longer while he lived was honour done to Amou or libations poured out upon the altars of the thousand gods whom Egypt worshipped during the centuries. Closed were many of their temples and dark the brows of their priests. "There is God," Akhnaton had said—and prostrating himself to Ra, he had worshipped the sun with the humility of those disciples of Christ who were to come to Egypt nearly fourteen hundred years after he had lived.

Egypt heard him indifferently, for Egypt loved her gods, and in every city there were the temples where sacrifice must be made to divinities whose very names ultimately were to be forgotten. Ra, the Lord of the Sun, she favoured as but one among many, and Osiris and Isis were still enshrined in her memory. To her the new gospel was a heresy accursed, and many among her priests attributed it wholly to the teaching of the Israelites she then held captive. Was there not a Man of Levi, a slave moreover, who had the King's ear through the mouth of his dark-eyed daughter, Rebecca, and had not he taught Akhnaton his impieties? A new hatred towards the captive people filled many hearts and the whips fell heavily upon bent backs. Yet no man had dared to say of the beautiful Jewess that she was aught but a prophetess. A holy woman of her own faith—let her remain among them, or pay the penalty for her daring.

It was she who now crept to the river's bank to see the cortège pass by and to know that the end of the dream had come.

There, on yonder splendid barge, was the pitiful lifeless image of the King whom men had worshipped yesterday. Vases of many heads, the heads of man, of dog, of the jackal and the hawk, contained the heart, the lungs, the intestines of him who but a few days ago had lifted his arms to the Sun and had cried: "There is One God; let us worship him." Rebecca saw the great boat from Abydos and the lotus flowers which were its ornament. Women, stripped to the waist, beat their breasts and mourned the dead ruler. Weird music was echoed in strange harmonies across the still waters of the Nile, and men clad in leopard skins burned incense as they went. Slowly, mournfully, the great King was thus carried to that tomb, deep down in the solid rock, where for three thousand years he should sleep until he arose to mount high in the chariots of the Sun, through a vague heaven where the spirits of the blessed dead should at length find peace.

All this Rebecca saw and other things less to her liking.

The barge from Abydos was towed by another barge, and in that some thirty of the young men of her own people sat at the oars, while the whips of the taskmasters, wielded with calculated ferocity, lashed them unsparingly. These cursed Israelites, surely, had taught the dead King that heretic faith which now the nation would repudiate! No longer would Akhnaton be at hand to protect them. And so the whips cracked cruelly upon the bare flesh, and the blood ran and cries of pain were mingled with the strange harmonies musicians made to appease the offended gods.

"Oh, my people, my people!" Rebecca wailed—and she beat her own breast and closed her eyes in prayer and craved of Jehovah that all this might end and the Sun God turn his face upon them in mercy at last.

So the procession moved slowly onward, and she watched it draw in toward the shore and pass in stately splendour toward that tomb wherein all was darkness and none might comfort the great King who had befriended her for the Faith's sake. Israelites were waiting here, and again the lash was lifted for them and the bullocks who were to drag the heavy burden through the deep

sand beyond the rushes. Rebecca's heart was heavy as she watched them at their task, and she was weeping when the young man Ezekiel approached her and looked at her with a lover's eyes which still could question her sincerity. Neither had any right to be there in the precincts of the tombs, and discovery might send them to their death. Ezekiel understood this, and he thought also that he understood why Rebecca had come. "It is Tutankhaton she would see," he told himself—and there was anger in his heart at the thought.

"You want to see the Prince," he said boldly; "do you not know that it is death to be found here, Rebecca? Have you lost all wisdom, then?"

She looked at him with kindly eyes—but not those of a woman who loved.

"Sakere is now our king," she retorted coldly; "he is the friend of our people. Why should he punish us because we mourn one whom he loved? No, no, he would not forbid us. I think he would wish us to be here, Ezekiel. And see now: they reach the tomb and the Great One goes down to darkness; but they believe the day will come when he will ride through the heavens and the Sun God will receive him. Is that in our Law and does Jehovah so speak to us. Oh, I fear this day and what will come after, Ezekiel—for Sakere is weak and the priests are strong, and who knows if he will abide in the Faith by which freedom should come to us and to our race."

Ezekiel cared very little for any faith, but very much for Rebecca, whose beautiful image was ever in his mind and whose heart he would gladly have kept beating against his own. But for this blind idea of hers that a belief in Israel's God would induce Pharaoh to set her people free, they would have been married long ago, and he would have been a gold-beater in the great town of Thebes and she would have worn his bracelets upon her beautiful arms. At this very moment he would much sooner have caught her in his arms and entwined his hands in her raven black hair and felt her warm lips burning upon his own; but for him there had been no passionate hour, and in his anger he had charged her often with the unforgivable sin, as the Jew must regard it.

"Is it really of our race you are thinking, Rebecca?" he now asked, afraid almost to look her in the face; "do you care so much what Sakere believes—or is it of the Prince Tutankhaton you would hear? He, it is said, changes his name already that the god may be honoured. In the bazaars they name him Tutankhaton no longer, but call him Tutankhamen—which is the Living Image of Amon. There is your friend of Jehovah made manifest. Shall I speak, then, of him first of all?"

She flushed hotly, looking at him with wild eyes.

"Who names him thus?" she exclaimed.

"What viper's tongue utters such sayings? And you, Ezekiel, that would speak of love for me—the God of Israel reward you!"

"Nevertheless, I know that this palace has sheltered you and that but three days ago the priest Seeti summoned you to the Temple. Is the God Ra, then, so much to you already that you forget Jehovah, or is it love for the man who would dishonour you?"

Rebecca clenched her hands as though in some piteous appeal. She would argue with him because of the very wrong his thoughts did her.

"You know that I have visited the Prince often—you know it!" she cried; "there is shame upon you that you use such words. Do not they say already that Sakere's days are numbered and that he will go to his fathers before the month of the waters? Then the Prince reigns and will be the friend of our people. He also believes as the great King that we are one in Faith and he also will take pity upon the captive. For that I go to him that I may speak of our desires. 'Set this people free,' I have said, 'and Jehovah shall send a blessing upon thee.' And he has listened patiently and has said that the day may yet come. Oh, shame, that one of my Faith should so upbraid me—shame that dishonour should lie upon the lips of the man who would lead me to his bed!"

Ezekiel hung his head, for he felt that this rebuke was true. He knew that he was incapable of understanding a woman, who even in these days of her youth seemed called to be the leader of her people. Her very coldness toward him, however, fostered the mean rather than the noble thought, and he abandoned none of his suspicions merely because she had denied them.

"You deceive yourself," he said, with a lofty self-command he had the wit to feign; "the Prince is playing with you as he has played with so many. Did I not tell you what the people know? The priests of Amon are too strong for you, and when Sakere is dead the new Faith will be denounced and all the old gods will be worshipped once more. Sell not your honour upon any such hopes, Rebecca. You cannot save Israel; you can but destroy yourself. By the God of Abraham, I would kill this man with my own hand if I believed what the old priests say of you and of him. A slave for his tent—God forbid that you should become that!"

"And God forbid that I should permit any thus to brand my name with infamy. I will see you no more, Ezekiel. When our people are free, you shall come to me with ashes on your head and shall confess your shame. Until that day, farewell. You are worthy of no woman's love and it is you who would make of her the slave of your desires."

She turned upon her heel and left him by the river's bank. It may be that even then he would have dared all to follow her; but soldiers were coming down from the little

hills beneath which they had laid the great Akhnaton in his gorgeous tomb, and Ezekiel remembered the penalty. So leaping into his barge he rowed away down the river and speedily was lost to view.

Rebecca, however, went out boldly among the soldiers and was by them recognized and acclaimed. "There goes the Jewish slave of Tutankhaton," they said, and they smiled to each other while she passed. Her place, nevertheless, was out yonder in the wilderness, deserted by all at this hour of sunset when at last the mighty King was alone in the tomb they had hewed for him.

He slept, he who had worshipped the One God, and for three thousand years none would awake him. Then his chariot would be horsed by the steeds of the Sun and he would sail away through the infinite heavens to that paradise amid the ether where the life everlasting should begin.

Rebecca prayed for him now while music floated up from the dark river and the stars shone gloriously and a silence as of the very grave itself reigned in the wilderness where the dead were at rest.

CHAPTER II

WE GO TO THEBES

THE obscure Sakere died in the autumn of the year as the priests of Amon prophesied that he would, and the young Tutankhamen reigned in his stead.

No longer was he known as the Living Image of Aton, but had become the servant of Amon and the ancient gods. And he lived no more in the City of the Horizon of God, but reigned and ruled in the mighty Thebes of the Hundred Gates.

To the people the reversion to the old Faith was very welcome, for many had regarded Akhnaton as little better than a heretic, and had resented the insults offered to their favourite divinities. Old Temples were now reopened and forgotten images restored. Once more incense was burned at neglected shrines, and the wild beasts were driven in to the service of the priests. Moreover, a lighter rule of conduct prevailed, and, throwing off the shackles of abstinence, men discovered new vices which would have brought them to the torture chamber in the great King's days.

Rebecca had followed the young King to Thebes when he turned his back upon the Horizon of God; but she soon perceived that his favour had been lost to her, and that the priests now had him in their keeping. With the "Man of Levi," her father, she had taken up her residence in a little house near the tombs, and there she plied her trade of dress-maker to the royal house, making the wonderful hoods sewn with sequins, for which the women of Thebes were famous, and not a little skilled in the shaping of those strangely wrought gloves which were to cover even the

hands of the King. But her heart was heavy while she worked, and she thought often of those brethren of hers who bore the heat and burden of the day in the quarries, and upon whose backs the whips of the taskmasters fell without mercy.

She had almost forgotten Ezekiel at that time, and often fell to wondering if the love of man would ever be awakened within her.

Sometimes she feared all the sensuality and voluptuousness of this mighty city, and would ask herself why she dwelt therein when Faith had departed and she might hope no longer that her people would win freedom. But one friend remained, and he was a young priest of Ra—Ama by name, who served the Temple which others had deserted. This man of giant stature and the eyes of night could mould her as he willed. It was he who told her one day that she could buy her freedom of Tutankhamen if she had but the mind.

"Do you not see that the King is in love with you?" he said, almost angry, as though this fact had long been known to all about the palace. Rebecca, however, answered him with the simplicity of a child.

"What you say is treason, Ama, and not to be believed. What am I but the lowliest of the King's slaves, and how should he remember me at all? Say no such thing lest you be punished for the words. Nor put such thoughts into my mind, since I may not think of any lover until my people have their freedom."

They were alone in the Temple of Ra when he spoke, and incense burned sweetly before an image of the god. Wild beasts howled in the courtyard adjacent, for lions of Syria were there and tigers from the land far south, and monkeys to chatter ceaselessly; while, in the pool of the fountain, crocodiles lifted their snouts to hiss for prey. Ama was the keeper of these to the glory of Ra—but to mock his holiness there were the dancing women from the desert, camped in the open square beyond the gate, and beating their rude drums incessantly, while their voluptuous eyes searched the faces of the passers-by as though seeking there the eternal response of man to woman. Ama cursed them, nevertheless, his pulse quickened because they were there, for he also was as other men, despite the leopard's skin about his shoulders.

And now he had looked into Rebecca's eyes and perceived she was a woman.

"Child," he said, "you do well to rebuke me, but your knowledge is not of this world, and there is evil where your young eyes see but good. The King loves you but because of what you were to Akhnaton, the Holy One; he spares you when he might command. Think how many thousands of the women of your race would go gladly to the palace this night if he did but beckon them. But you will lie in his arms only when you go willingly, for he fears the vengeance of the dead."

She turned upon him, as she had turned upon Ezekiel at the river's brink. This insult to her

race—how dare he utter it! And yet she quivered when he looked into her eyes, and the hand which he pressed was moist within his own.

"The women of my people suffer slavery but not dishonour. You do them a great wrong, Ama, and I should never speak to you again because of it. Yet you also were the great King's friend, and I cannot forget that you have done very much for my brethren, and still wish well to them. Tell me not vain things, then, nor put these thoughts into my head. The King will never love such as I—he would not stoop to the meanest of his slaves—or, if he did, how would it avail me? Think you that, at the price of my shame, he would let my people go? Truly, you do not believe anything of the kind, and you have some other motive for telling me this. Oh, be frank with me, as you were frank in the days of the Holy One of Ra, whom you served so faithfully!"

The priest cast down his eyes and the colour mounted his cheeks. Truly had she discerned that some other motive guided him, and that motive was the love for her he had long nourished secretly. Rage against Tutankhamen was in his heart, and the fear that the King would steal this beautiful Jewess from him and that he would see her no more. And so he had put this subtle suggestion to her. The King loved her! He wished to know if she, in turn, also loved the King.

"Child," he admitted at length, "I am justly rebuked, and yours are words of wisdom. It would avail you nothing to sacrifice your honour to the King, nor could your people's freedom be won by such means. Nevertheless, much may yet be done, and while I have your goodwill I myself will seek to do it; not in vain does the daughter of Akhnaton reign in the palace, nor is her ear denied to me. I shall see her frequently, and the name of Israel will be often on my lips."

Rebecca trembled; she knew not why.

Watching her eyes with a lover's gaze—for love of women was not denied even to the priests of Ra—Ama observed the strange light in them; and then he saw that her breast was heaving and that some great emotion moved her. And so he knew that she loved him even as he loved her, and his whole soul was shaken by the tremendous thought that it should be in his arms and not the King's that she must lie.

"You see the Queen every day?" she asked, almost with pathos in her tone.

"Every day, and always to speak of your people—and of you. Are you not the daughter of the Man of Levi, and did not the great King confer freedom upon you and your family? If any stand for Israel, surely your father's name shall come first. You must thank me for that, Rebecca—you must say to yourself that I am your friend before any in Thebes."

She could not doubt his meaning, for it was to be read in his flaming eyes. A sense of a guilty passion put the lips of both to shame

and forbade the outspoken word in which others would have taken refuge. Yet their love was guilty only in so far as it dared the King's displeasure, and would have mocked him if declared. Let Ama take Rebecca to his house and all the city would say: "There is the man who has stolen the pretty Jewess from the Most High Prince." And then they would ask: "Would the King suffer it? Will he not justly punish those who thus make sport of him?" Assuredly death would be their reward—for him the broken body and the shapeless; for her, the pool and the reptiles to tear her to pieces.

Both the man and the woman knew this, and because of their knowledge their tongues were tied. A sense of guilt possessed them, though, so far, they had been guilty only in their thoughts. They loved with their whole souls, and longed for that passionate embrace which, mouth to mouth, should seal a holy contract. Nevertheless, they knew that it must be an embrace of death. The King would never forgive them. He would punish them even for their thoughts which dominated both their hearts.

Rebecca had this very much in her mind when she looked up shyly to Ama's face and answered his command.

"Truly I know that you are my friend, Ama. Sometimes I have said that if my people's freedom could be won and we went back to the land of our fathers, you also might think of coming with us. This can be no land for you now. The old gods are set up again, and they mock Jehovah. But with us you would worship the Most High, and you would teach us even as we teach you. Ah, if that dream could come true, what a happy day it would be!"

The priest shook his head—not by that road would freedom be won. He loved a Jewess, but well he knew that to Israel's eyes his love would appear but an infamy.

"A dream, truly," he said, "since the King hears your scribe no more and Amon reigns. They will never let you go, Rebecca, not in the lifetime of any of us, I fear. Our road must not be to the north, but to the south when the good day comes. We shall go to the great white waters, and they will shelter us; but that day is not yet, since all is not lost, and the Queen may yet prevail. God help you, my child, and give you courage. I have put my faith in Him, and He will lead us." And, bending down, he kissed her on the mouth; the first time that he had done so in all the months of watching and of praying together.

She left him with that kiss burning upon her lips and went back slowly to her father's house on the south side of the city, where lay the tombs.

Perhaps the very secrecy of this dangerous passion fascinated and filled her heart with a strange sense of joy.

Like all women of her race, her maidenhood had been one of unsullied purity, and in the holiness of her quest of the Unknown God she had given but little thought to men. None the

less, as the years went on the passionate nature of the woman stood revealed and desire of love gave light to her eyes. For a season she had feared that her father would betroth her to the young man Ezekiel, and that swift marriage might doom her to the nomad's tent and the life of the wilderness; but Ezekiel had not followed Tutankhamen to Thebes, and she had begun to believe that she would never see him again. How small a welcome, then, she had for him when, that very night, she met him on the threshold of her father's house, and he claimed her as though already the priest waited to bless them, and the night must find her in his arms.

"Do you not know that your father sent word to me by Jacob, son of Balaam, who came to the city ten days ago? And I set out at once gladly, Rebecca, to save you from this shame which they would put upon you, here in Thebes. Oh, do not make any mistake about that! Far and wide they know of it, and say even that it has come to the ears of the Queen. So your only hope is to marry me, and I will carry you down even to the far city of the sea, where we will set up our house together."

She shook herself free of his embrace and faced him boldly.

"You, then, also listen to the Market Place, Ezekiel—you stand with the women at the well. Oh, I see that you have wide ears and miss no evil word that is spoken! Such is my reward for seeking the goodwill of the King for our people. Such are the thanks I receive for my labours—"

He heard her impatiently, as one who had now the right to dominate.

"A King will free no slave because a slave has asked it, Rebecca. I tell you that you are in peril, and that any hour the priest may slay you and yours. There is hope for you only if you become my wife, and to that end I have made this long journey, that I may carry you away to a far city where all this will be forgotten. If you delay you are mad, for your house will perish and all within. Let us go, then, and speak to your father at once and tell him that his wish is our law and that tomorrow shall find us man and wife. Thereafter, if anything can be done to free our people . . ."

She pushed him aside, weary with his importuning and believing no word of what he said, though the words troubled her, and all that night she must think of them while she lay and sleep refused to comfort her.

Her beloved, venerable father, whom Israel venerated; her little brother who was the light of the home; the sisters to whom she had been as a little mother since the day when the mother of them all went into the unknown—was it true, as Ezekiel said, that all these were in peril, and that the priests might slay them because of the King's love of her? She could tremble at such a thought, and, looking up to the wonderful stars, cry to Israel's God to save her.

And then she thought of the dark-eyed

Ama, and of his confession made that very night in the Temple of Ra.

A year ago Ama had been the friend all-powerful, whose word could have opened every gate; but now he had lost the King's favour and none heeded him. Amon was worshipped, and the children of Amon prevailed before the throne. Ama himself might have to flee Thebes at no distant date, and if he went he would take her with him to that land of the South, of which the fables told such wonders.

Yet, if she went, what of her father, of her sisters, and of the brother she adored?

Truly was she greatly afflicted; and when the day dawned at last, she believed that Ezekiel had spoken truly when he said that she and her house might perish because the King had loved her.

CHAPTER III

TUTANKHAMEN REMEMBERS REBECCA

EZEKIEL soon perceived that he must be patient if he would win Levi's daughter, and for some days after his return to Thebes he spoke no word of love to her. She herself acted and spoke as though nothing had been said between them; nor did her father seek to influence her in any way. Not by love and marriage would Israel go free—yet the day would come when his son should appear before Pharaoh to cry: "Let my people go!" and the Lord God of his fathers would open the gates in that hour as he had prophesied.

Meanwhile, the lash fell relentlessly in the quarries, and the blood of the slaves was poured into that very tomb where Egypt's King must one day lie.

Tutankhamen, following the custom of his people, would often drive out to the Luxor Gate, and thence to the desolate hills beneath which he must sleep until the gods should summon him.

Then he would watch the Israelites at work, hundreds together, dragging the great stones up the hills as though they had been bullocks, while the taskmasters cracked their whips and the weak fell by the way, to be lashed back to life, if life yet remained in them. The great Akhnaton proposed to give these slaves their freedom, but the young King with the hot blood in his veins took a savage delight in their labours, and even experienced a sense of pleasure when he witnessed their punishment.

The pure worship of the Sun God, Ra, no longer troubled him—and although he had married Akhnaton's daughter, the very memory of days of worship and fasting was distasteful to him.

So the old priests had been recalled to the palace, and the new Faith with its asceticism put aside.

Tutankhamen lived as other Kings had lived before him—the life of a youth whom destiny has called to be the absolute ruler of a great and highly cultured people.

Slaves of many nations ministered to his pleasures. The Kings of many nations paid him tribute. He had but to lift his hand in command and whatever he willed was done. Had he chosen to send to Levi's house for his daughter Rebecca to be carried to the palace, his servants would have thought no more of it than of a request for a pitcher of wine. But he feared the priests of Amon, and they were the obstacle. It would be death for this young woman to become a member of his household—and had not the great King Akhnaton held her in high esteem, almost as a Holy One of Jehovah, the God of her Fathers?

In this mood he sought to forget the beauty of the girl and her strange psychic powers. Leaving the City of the Horizon of God for the greater city of pleasure and the hundred gates of free will he devoted himself for a while to his wife, the daughter of the beautiful Nefertete, and worshipped the old gods as the priests wished him to do. Rebecca was no more in his thoughts, for he believed her to be far away, and it was the accident of an evil day which revived the old passions in an instant and set him scheming to ensnare the beautiful Jewess.

Driving to Luxor after the heat of a day of spring-time, Tutankhamen was caught in one of those terrible sand-storms, which every dweller in the Southern country feared so greatly. The air was darkened, the wind blew as though the spirits of evil drove it, and the voices of the dead were to be heard in its wailings. All sheltered at the height of that fearful tempest, and even the chariot of the King came to a standstill at the Luxor gate, where many of the humble people were congregated—Rebecca among them, a scarlet mantle drawn about her head, but her wonderful eyes shining like the stars in the gloomy light of the archway.

Instantly the King perceived her, and as swiftly the old passion was awakened. The others there, Bedouins, Syrians, wild women of the tribes, were as nothing to him, for the sight of Rebecca had fired his blood, and he could but gaze on her, entranced. Even he spoke his thoughts aloud to Sherdan, the Arab sheik who rode by his side, and ever had his ear—for this was a man of evil heart who had led the King to many a day of evil, and knew neither god nor scruple.

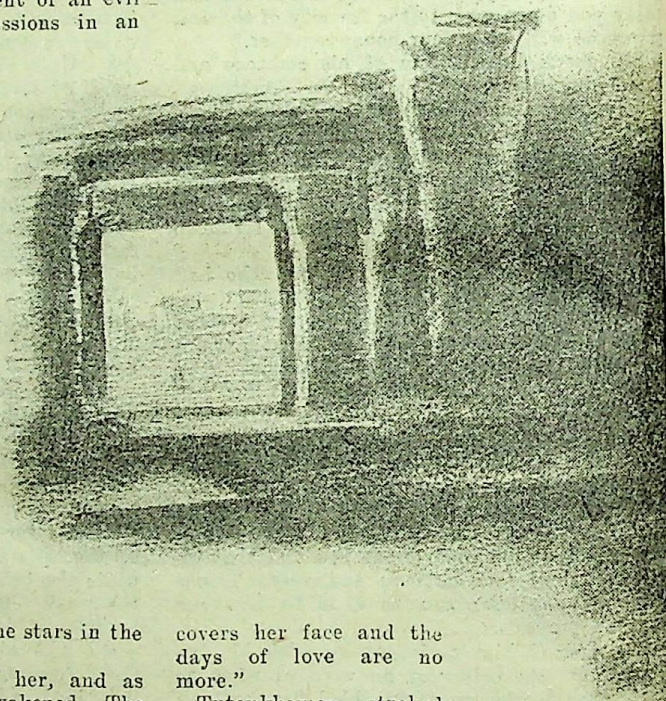
"Saw you that woman, Sherdan?" said the King. And then he asked as though he did not know. "Was she not Rebecca—the daughter of the Man of Levi?"

"O King, indeed it is so," rejoined the

cunning Arab, with the air of one who was glad to be the bearer of good tidings; "the daughter of the Man of Levi, as you say, Lord, and assuredly as fair a flower as grows in all Egypt to-day."

"Fairer than the lotus and the stars that shine in the high heavens of our dreams. I knew not that she had come to Thebes, Sherdan. Assuredly they told me that the priests had carried her to the sea and that the city of the North now harboured her."

"Blame not the priests in their wisdom, O King. The eyes of the eagle are theirs when the song of the quarry is music for the skies. I doubt not their aim miscarried, for where is the woman who will listen to the priest when her back is turned toward the altar and the lyre is calling her to the city of her desires? She outwitted them, I doubt not, and if these eyes of hers speak truly, she will outwit many a lover ere the veil



covers her face and the days of love are no more."

Tutankhamen stroked his clean-shaven chin; and after thinking a little while, he beckoned to Rebecca to advance, and, pushing her way amid the press of the people, she made obeisance at the chariot-side and asked what was her lord's will.

"We have not seen you these many days, my daughter. Report said that you were at a far city. Did the tongues lie, then, or are you but newly come to us?"

"They lied, O King. Never was I at the city of the sea in my life. I am now a month here in Thebes, as the priest Ama should have

told you. Lord, can it be that he dwells so long in the favour of your countenance, he who was the great King's friend?"

It was a bold rebuke, which might have sent many a woman to the cold waters of the great river; but Rebecca knew her power and was not afraid to make use of it. The

this slave of slaves; "his friends may have died for us with him. I like not to hear, daughter, that you have been in the city unknown to us. We have given great privileges to your father's house; but we will not be mocked. Make your future movements known to us and see to it you bring no dis-



"Do you not see that the King is in love with you?" he said, almost angry, as though this fact had long been known to all about the palace

King, in his turn, was greatly moved at the sound of her voice and that thrill of passion, which only young men know, stirred in his veins as he watched her and perceived once more how very beautiful she was.

"The great King is dead," he answered, almost as though he would stoop to argue with

grace upon those who have won our favour. There is goodwill toward Israel still in our heart, but presumption may yet be punished."

He did not dare to say more, fearing the prying eyes of the multitude, which would babble in every porch to-night of this strange encounter.

The King deigning to notice the beautiful Jewess, the daughter of the Man of Levi! Well, they knew what that meant. She would go to the palace, of course, and her house would know her no more. There were bold leers and odd glances exchanged at that—so that when the King's chariot drove away many forgot to kneel to him and some laughed outright. It remained for Sherdan, the Bedouin, to hint that there had been folly and that it was necessary to repair it.

"They will think evil, Lord. It may come even to the Queen's ears. We did wrong to speak with the girl in such a place. The whole city will know of it and even the whips of the Captain's guards will not flog discretion into the babblers. May your servant perish for the word if it be not for his love of you, yet he would say: 'Let this woman be carried from Thebes without delay.' My servants shall do it if you, O King, will say, but the word. She shall go to the tents of Esra and there, Lord, you shall visit her as you list. Aught else is to seek the enmity of the priests, who assuredly will not spare her, for was she not the favoured disciple of Ra, and will not the heretic's faith be proclaimed again in the very palace of the King? This, Lord, is wisdom to which I beg that you will incline your ear."

Tutankhamen listened, while his heart beat fast.

A vision of a secret passion entranced him and fired his young blood.

How easy would it all be. To let this Sherdan carry the woman away to the tents of Esra, there to hide her amidst the wild Arabs of the desert. He could go to her often when he drove abroad, or put himself at the head of the guard to visit the outlying villages. And Sherdan would arrange all the rest—the secret oasis, the tabernacle of the gold and silver couches—the fine raiment, the perfumes, the incense, and the splendid barge where the musicians should sing of love and the lapping of sweet waters upon the stately prow should be the harmony of their wonderful nights.

He thought of all this, the young King who had so few years to live, and he was well pleased.

"How would you take her, Sherdan? What means would you employ?"

"Let her be sent back to the City of the Horizon of God whence she came and where her people are. I will post my horsemen upon the road and they will make the rest their business. Nevertheless, let it not be done too speedily after that which has befallen us to-day, lest the rumour of it get abroad and it come to the Queen's ear. Better, Lord, that you do it by the mouth of Ama, the priest, whom none suspects. He will pay heed if you speak of the woman's people and what may yet be done for them. And if, afterwards, his tongue lacks prudence, some surely will be found to cut it out."

"Ah," mused Tutankhamen, "a man of God whose heart is of stone, Sherdan. What a life we should lead if we listened to him. Already he hath cursed the Syrian dancers in the market and scattered the doves before the altar of Isis. Shall we mourn our fathers, then, even until death overtake us? Is there no light for our eyes save that of the tomb? Such words are in this man's mouth for all to hear and to mock in these better days. Truly would it be well to snare such a one in the net he hath woven. Let him lead the girl to the City of the Horizon of God, and men shall say that he is her lover at the very hour when she lies in my arms. Such would be just recompense."

"And mine, Lord, when this work is done?"

"Then," exclaimed the King, looking at him as though no reward were too great for such a service, "I will make thee a king in thine own province; the master of gold and of rubies and of many slaves. Thou shalt be my honoured vassal, and many shall do homage at thy throne. Therefore do not delay, Sherdan, but go to the priest Ama this very night and begin thy work—a word, a hint at the outset, leading him cunningly until the appointed hour is come."

"It shall not be long delayed, O King; this night I will go as you command. The gods keep all knowledge of my errand from the Queen. We perish if she discover us, and even the people may cry out upon you if any dishonour be done to Akhnaton's daughter. So all my wisdom will be necessary; yet if I do not come to you in a few days' time to say that Ama will go to the city and Rebecca, the Jewess, be with him, then may ashes be upon my head and my children go out as slaves."

Tutankhamen heard him gladly.

"And my reward shall be no less than your service," he said. "Go, and the gods be with you."

CHAPTER IV

AMA IS VISITED BY SHERDAN

THE priest Ama was alone in the Temple of Ra when Sherdan, the Bedouin, came to see him; and such a visit surprised him very much.

It was about the ninth hour of the day and the temple was lighted by one great lamp of gold, in which a flickering wick spluttered upon its bed of oil and cast an intermittent yellow glare upon the mighty pillars round about and the sacrificial stone before which the brazier fumed eternally, as though, amid its smoke, the heavenly rays presently would be discerned.

There were wild beasts in the courtyard without, and their dismal howling made weird music of the night.

Now it would be the snarl of the tiger, or the lion's deep roaring, or the trumpeting of the mighty elephant, or the bellowing of the angry bull, whose life-blood must run that the gods might be appeased. Upon this in the interval there followed the hissing of the crocodiles and the beating of the wings of monstrous birds, unseen in the shadows of the architrave or moving like gigantic bats from the roof of one temple to that of its neighbour—libertines all in the matter of their gods and worshipping only the high heavens or the carrion flesh below.

Ama heard neither the roarings of the beasts nor the beating of the wings.

This giant of a man with the immense frame and the lover's eyes and the head of the inspired prophet had no vision within those temple walls nor ear for its cmons.

His thoughts had carried him to a pleasant oasis far south of Thebes, even to the white waters of the mighty river and to the land which knew neither Amon nor Osiris. And in his journeyings his imagination had set him upon a fair, white horse of Araby and he had carried a dark-eyed Jewess in his arms, and often he had drawn rein to worship the Sun God who gave the woman to him and to press her lips to his own in that passionate embrace which life and service had denied him these many years.

Yes, he had told himself, this city of Thebes could be a sanctuary neither for him nor for Rebecca any longer. All the old gods were worshipped once more, and those who taught of the High and Holy One were mocked openly in the market place and the temples. Already they had spat upon his robes and torn the very mantle from his shoulders, and soon the day must come when the priests of Osiris would cast him to the beasts and he would be torn limb from limb in the courtyard of this sanctuary he had guarded so faithfully. Nor might he hope any longer for the protection of Tutankhamen and the honour which had been paid to him because he had been the servant of the great King Akhnaton. The young monarch had lost his faith and had given himself wholly to the evil whereof cometh death and the eternal darkness. Nothing might be hoped for from him or even from his Queen, who mourned these things but feared the priests.

As for Rebecca, whom he loved with all the force and passion of a man whose natural instincts have long been repressed, her salvation was even more perilous than his own. The King would send for her sooner or later, he believed, and if he sent for her, the priests would kill her and the Queen would approve the deed.

For there could be no hope for a daughter of Israel who had been so unfortunate as to win the love of the highest among them and to lift her eyes even to the throne. Flight alone could save her from the vengeance by which she was menaced—and upon flight Ama was now determined, even though it led to the

wilderness and their grave should be found in the white waters of the river.

This mood was upon him when he heard a footstep in the precincts of the Temple, and awaking from his dream found himself confronted by Sherdan, whose place in the King's affections he knew well and whose influence about the throne seemed, at that hour, paramount. A dark suspicion instantly took possession of the priest's mind and quickened all his faculties. Why had this man come to him and what did he seek? The lover answered, "Rebecca"—and the lover spoke truly.

"The favour of the gods be upon thee, Ama. I am come by command of our Lord, the King, to have private talk with thee, and I crave that thou wilt incline a willing ear."

Ama rose, his hands crossed upon his breast, and the golden band about his forehead showing its glittering jewels in flashes of fire where the uncertain light discovered them.

"Peace be with thee also, Sherdan. The King's pleasure is ever my law. Speak freely, then, and I will listen. Is it because of the maid Rebecca that thou art come? Assuredly it must be so, but for what else would bring thee at such an hour!"

Sherdan winced at the words, silently cursing the priest's acumen and believed already that his task would not be an easy one.

"Truly of the maid Rebecca, as you say," he admitted, becoming less familiar as he spoke. "None knows better than yourself the King's goodwill toward her and the people of Israel; yet because of it, evil tongues are loosed and much wickedness is spoken. Therefore our Lord thinks that her friends should take her from the city again to the Horizon of God wherein she may find a refuge and still enjoy the protection of the Highest. Who better, then, to conduct her there, than the priest of Ra who was the great King's servant?"

Ama thought about it a little while, great contempt for this man lying in his heart and a quick perception of the King's motive.

"Who am I that I should be a father to this daughter of Israel? Does the King, then, fear the Man of Levi, that he will not do the royal pleasure? I would ask first, Sherdan, have you been to Rebecca's house? Have you spoken of this to those who have her in their keeping? If not, why come to me until her own father has heard you patiently?"

Sherdan was prepared for this, and he answered very readily:

"The King fears the priests, Ama; he fears that if she go alone with the friends of her house, she will never come safely to the city, so great is the anger of the servants of Amon toward her. But you the people honour and you may conduct her in safety. Moreover, there shall be men of the King's guard for your escort and with these you need to fear none. Not so, if it were the Man of Levi and his company. We can offer no guard to them; nor would the royal pleasure be their security when the gates of Thebes have closed upon them. Go, then, as the King commands and

God be with you. No better service could you do the people of Israel nor one which will bring you so swift a recompense."

He paused, dwelling upon his words to observe their effect. Ama also pondered long over them, wondering at this strange attempt to ensnare him, but not wholly understanding it.

"I am to go to the City of the Horizon of God, Sherdan—and thereafter?"

"To establish the maid among her own people and then to return to us. Truly would the King fear to lose your wisdom and your love. You will return that he may honour you before the people."

"And when would he wish me to depart, Sherdan?"

"At sunrise, upon the third day after the feast of Ra, which no doubt you will wish to keep here in your own temple. . . ."

Ama smiled a little bitterly.

"The King, then, has not forgotten the One God."

"He remembers him above all the others."

"Then I shall see him offering incense in the Temple upon that day."

"I doubt not that he will come, if the priests of Amon do not forbid."

Ama made a gesture of anger and contempt.

"The priests of unrighteousness and the powers of darkness! The great God do justice unto them. Say this to the King and also that I will take the road. I have spoken, Sherdan; there is now nothing more between us." And he turned toward the great image of the god and worshipped silently. Sherdan, however, crept from the Temple with guilty step.

"The fool!" he said to himself. "The gods send that my men do not slay him as he goes, for assuredly I must put the maiden into the King's arms or my own life is forfeit." And he bethought him of the mighty machine of stone beneath which a man's body was so crushed that it became but a blur of mangled flesh and blood upon the reddened marble. No! No! He would do his work well enough, even if Ama must perish.

So he crept from the Temple while Ama prayed through the long night, and at dawn stretched out his arms to the great crimson globe of the sun as it leaped above the low hills and burned the earth with its far-flung fires. A libation he poured upon the stone and sacrificed doves from his cages, and then, bathing his head and arms in the translucent pool where the fountain of the lions had played, he made a frugal meal of bread and fruit and prepared to set off immediately for Rebecca's house, his heart beating fast despite his resolution, and the arms which would embrace her already trembling.

Herein, however, the maiden herself forestalled him; for even as he descended the Temple stairs, he perceived her coming up to seek him, and instantly he drew her toward him and held her long, as though she were the well-beloved who had been lost and was found.

"Ama," she said at length, her lips still almost touching his own, "I am in peril, Ama, and so I am come to you."

"Beloved," was his answer, "I have known it these many days. Now, speak and tell me truly that I may understand and together we may pray to your God and mine to help us."

Thus saying, he led her out to the arbour by the fountain, and there, in his arms, she told him all that she feared and had suffered since her lover, Ezekiel, returned to Thebes!

CHAPTER V

AKHNATON'S JEWELS

"EZEKIEL is still in my father's house," she said, as though ashamed to speak of any other in the presence of the man who loved her, "He is much changed, Ama; I think he has known the Syrian women and they have taught him evil. It is no longer the eyes of an honest man which look into my own; but those of one who has lived with wantons and the women of the tombs. Now I fear him greatly, for nothing will stand in his way if he cannot take me to his house and make me his wife. But yesterday he spoke of going to the King and making petition that I should be given to him that our people might know the royal favour and seek our Lord's protection still. What, then, shall I do, O dearest of my heart, for you see how sorely I am afflicted!"

Her tears flowed fast, so that he drew her beautiful head down upon his bare bosom and comforted her with wise words.

"The young man would go at his peril, for the King desires thee," he said; "nay, last night he sent one Sherdan, a Bedouin, to me, commanding me to carry thee to the City of the Horizon and there to leave thee among thine own people. Know you not, Rebecca, what such a journey would mean? The Arabs, servants of their masters' lust, would fall upon us even as we went and I should know thee no more. Nay, they would carry thee to the King's tent that there he might enjoy thee. So I said unto him: 'Yes, I will even take the maiden,' but in my heart were other thoughts. . . ."

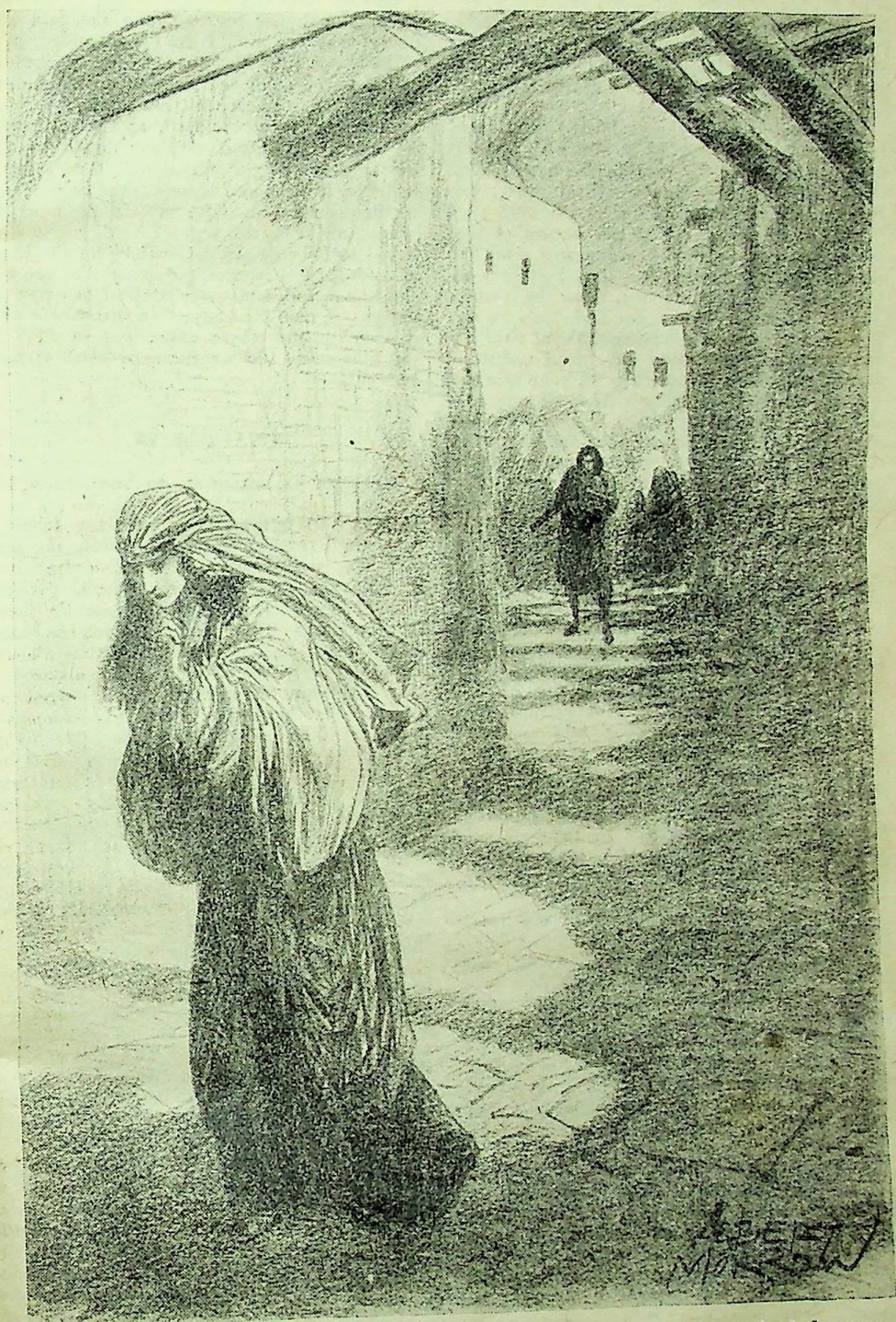
"Ama, Ama, you would never deliver me up to the King—you who have spoken of your great love for me!"

"Would I cut off the arm that holds thee or blind the eyes which look upon thy beloved face? Nay, truly, it is not to the City of the Horizon that we go, you and I, Rebecca, but far to the wilderness where those who seek shall not find and the wild beasts shall be our sentinels."

She looked up at him with eyes which the hope of love made to shine like the stars of an Eastern night.

"And what of the people of my house when I am gone, Ama?"

"Neither priests nor king will harm them. They have no part nor lot in this affair, and



He followed her for a while . . . believing that she would return to her father's house—
(See next page)

their names shall not be mentioned save it be with honour. For the many will say that your honour is saved by your flight and the priests care only to have me out of the city. As for the King, he will fear the Queen's displeasure, and I see honour rather than shame for your father's house."

"God send it so!" she exclaimed with deep feeling, and then, looking at him with eyes of love, while the colour mounted to her cheeks, she asked with a woman's natural reticence: "And when shall this thing be, Ama?"

"We leave to-morrow at the setting of the moon. It may be that Sherdan will send his messengers here to-day, and it is well that no suspicions shall be awakened. Now, be it upon you to do much that I am forbidden to do, and first to go to the boatman Abdul that his boat may be made ready and bread and flesh be put on board. Thereafter, let your raiment be made prepared, though little of any fine stuffs shall we need in the wilderness when the palm-tree shall be our roof and the sweet herbs our bed. Nay, it will be upon your fair white arms that Akhnaton's jewels shall shine and not beneath the veil of the sequins which now hides you from the eyes of men."

She drew back, wondering at his words.

"The jewels of Akhnaton? Did the great king, then, dower thee with jewels?"

For answer, he led her back to the Temple and, lifting a great casket inlaid with mother-of-pearl and rubies, he showed her so great a treasure that her eyes were almost blinded and no words would come to her lips.

For diamonds were there, of monstrous size, and rubies of which fables were told, and sapphires and the matchless pearls of the Orient, with a wealth of gold and silver the Royal Treasury might have envied. And to this man of the altar and the dreams it was as the very dust beneath his feet. Yet he knew women, and there was a strange light in his eyes when he watched Rebecca and waited for her to speak.

"All this treasure is the gift of the great King to thee, Ama?"

"Say rather to thee, my Rebecca, for assuredly now it is all thine own."

"To wear in the wilderness, Ama!" And all the woman's soul gave bitterness to the thought. Of what value these treasures if none but the skies and the white waters must look upon them? Ama knew well what such a saying meant, and he held her hand and laid kindly fingers upon her raven hair when he answered her.

"I shall found a Kingdom and a City of the people of Ra," he said, "and you shall be my Queen. Egypt shall hear of it and the Kings of Egypt send me their ambassadors. Let the word go out to my own and many will follow me, and they will not carry reeds in their hands. So hasten, my Rebecca, to do what is appointed and speak of it to none—nor forget that an unwise word might betray us; that for a folly we might die. . . ."

She was still greatly excited, but all the

hope of it, of the love dream and the flight, of the new land and the deliverance, animated her and gave her courage, and she told him gladly that she would do his errand.

"At the setting of the moon to-morrow night I shall find thee at the house of Abdul and we shall part nevermore, O Ama mine!"

"As thou sayest, beloved, at the setting of the moon. The God of Day keep thee and deliver thee safely to my arms." And long he held her, while about them was the holy silence of the Temple and the mystic light of its lamps and braziers.

And so Rebecca set out swiftly for the house of Abdul, the boatman, believing that she was alone, but followed every step of the way by the young man Ezekiel, whose heart was as a raging fire and whose anger was so plain to see that even the wayfarers mocked him as he went.

CHAPTER VI

REBECCA IS FOLLOWED TO THE RIVER

EZEKIEL had followed her from her father's house and watched and waited while she was with the priest in the Temple of Ra; but he had not dared to enter there, for he believed surely that she had gone to meet her lover the King, and he knew nothing of the truth as destiny had written it.

Had anybody told him that Ama was her lover and that Tutankhamen had played no part in that intrigue, he would have spat in his face and called him a liar. The King it must be, as all the town knew. And as for this fellow of a priest, he was no more than a go-between, and all his talk of righteousness was so much mockery. Ezekiel swore already that he would kill him; yet when he dwelt upon the threat he saw how foolish it was, since Ama rarely quitted the Temple and his own servants assuredly would slay any Israelite slave that dared to venture there.

No, verily, it must be with the woman he must deal; but how to deal with her his slow wit could not imagine. When he saw her come out of the Temple he was by no means sure that the King had not entered there to visit her; and he followed her for a while with little curiosity, believing that she would return to her father's house and that he would discover her there presently.

Rebecca, however, pursued an unusual path, and soon it appeared that she was going down to the brink of the river, upon a purpose Ezekiel thought that he could already divine, and one which filled him with new alarms. Did she, then, contemplate flight to an oasis; and if so, would Tutankhamen ride out in his turn to meet her there? It was a fair hazard, justly made, and might have been true enough if the Bedouin Sherdan had his way; but Ezekiel knew little

(Continued on p. 139)

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of Sherdan and less of Ama, the priest. His anger lay wholly against the King, who surely would rob him of the woman he desired so ardently.

"To the house of Abdul, the boatman, then! So it was he who abetted this design. I remember now the cayote he built for Sakere and all its magnificence. Yes, yes, the new King will have that prepared and they will set off together as maid and lover; and there with lotus flowers and incense and soft music as they go, and he alone will kiss her lips and hold her in his arms. The God of our Fathers put shame upon her, to sell herself thus for gold and jewels, she who is Levi's daughter and the hope of Israel."

He beat his breast in the rage of his jealousy and lay long amid the reeds watching Abdul's house and waiting for her to come out. It was almost the zenith of the day now, and lusty boatmen, carolling as they went, prepared to anchor their boats for the siesta, while others ate and drank in the shade of awnings, and on the shore the swarming citizens sought the cool shadow of the fountains or went to lie inert beneath the spreading leaves of gigantic palms. Ezekiel, however, hardly noticed the hour or felt the burning heat of the sun upon his body. A fever of rage consumed him; and when presently Rebecca came out he ran after her and boldly challenged her even in the street.

"So the King commands that the barge of the dead be made ready for him," he said sneeringly. "You are honoured, Rebecca, since you have become his messenger."

She did not answer him, but continued to walk swiftly towards her father's house. A tumult in the open street was the one thing she feared above all others; yet this mad Ezekiel might well bring it upon her if his mad jealousy could not be curbed.

"I saw you going to the house of Abdul," he persisted, "and so I learned the truth. It was in the Temple of Ra that the Highest gave you this command, I suppose, and you hastened to obey. Ho, ho, the silence of the waters and the King for your ferryman. Assuredly our people are honoured when their daughters so sell themselves for the bracelets upon their arms and the anklets of gold which so become them. Would you have this said in the Tabernacle, Rebecca? Would you wish Israel to know of it?"

She walked on, her heart beating fast and her cheeks on fire.

"You are mad to say such things," she protested. "The King pays me no such honour, nor have I spoken with him these many months."

"Not at the Luxor gate, Rebecca—not there? Oh, how quickly the lie comes to the lips of a woman! Does not all Israel talk of it? He stopped her chariot and put shame upon you before the citizens. Do you think

I have no ears, that I am deaf to such sayings?"

"I spoke not with the King, though he would have had speech with me. They lie who say such things. Nor have I seen him this day, as Jehovah is my witness."

He believed her, but he would not admit it. Perchance her sincerity rebuked him, for presently he said in a gentle voice:

"If you will marry me, Rebecca, I will forget all this. We will return to the city of the Horizon of God and all will be well with us. Our people will honour you and you may even continue to possess the King's favour to our profit. Be wise and bring no evil upon your father's house. You can only do that by marrying me, so let it be quickly, that we may go away before the Queen's anger visits you and we are utterly undone."

She turned about to face him, her courage quickened.

"I will never marry you, Ezekiel. You have had my answer many times. When I marry it will be the man I love. I have never loved you, and you are not the husband of my choice. So leave me in peace, I beg of you, and in my turn I will try to forget how you have afflicted me and to forgive you."

He was terribly enraged, stamping his foot and plucking at his breast as though hate consumed him like a fire. Nor could he control himself any longer; but raising his voice, he cried to all the people and the houses about: "Ho! here is a daughter of Israel that would sell herself to the King. Come and look at her, good people; come and see how she carries herself in her shame." And this he said many times, hastening after her with breast bared and sweat running down his face.

Happily the hour forbade that he should have a great audience. Some, indeed, who were abroad turned to look curiously at the beautiful girl, who hurried on with crimson cheeks and tears in her wonderful eyes. A very old Israelite spat in Rebecca's path and a woman of Syria plucked her robe and mocked her as she passed. But she came at length in safety to her father's house, and there she bolted the gate against Ezekiel and went to tell them why she had done so. And the man of Levi heard her patiently, though his mind was greatly troubled and he feared exceedingly what might come after.

"The youth has lost his senses," he reflected. "I see that he can never be your husband, Rebecca, nor is it my wish that you should marry him. It is not of the King's friendship that we should complain, for even if he be not of our religion he is the son-in-law of the great Akhnaton and will do us no evil while honour is still paid to that great name. So if Ezekiel goes to our people they will know how to answer him, and verily it seems to me that he must go at his own peril; for what will Egypt

say of the Israelites that mock its King, and how will it answer it? The stone is likely to be his portion, or the pool of the fountain. A vain young man in truth, and one that is likely to pay dear for his folly. You, my daughter, are wise to forbid him this house and to deny him that which he seeks; nor fear anything from Israel, for our people will applaud you."

She was greatly comforted and wished that she had the courage to speak of Ama and the priest's great love for her; but there her heart failed her and she did not dare to confess the thing she was about to do. Never would it be forgiven her that she had married a man who was not of her faith, and although she knew that she could justify the deed in her own eyes, it were vain to suppose that she would convince the great leader to whom Jehovah was the beginning and the end of all things.

So she held her peace, and before the day was done the wisdom of her silence was made manifest. For there was a mighty conflict in Thebes that night between the Israelites and the people of many races, and so fierce was the tumult that the spearmen came out from the Royal Palace and soon the streets ran with blood, and the wounds of dying men and stricken women made the terrible music of the night.

Ezekiel wrought this mischief, as the man of Levi foresaid that he would.

Going about heedless of his folly, a vision of Rebecca's dark eyes and white skin ever in his mind, he had cried his passion in the streets, passing from house to house of the Israelites and telling them of his wrongs.

"The daughter of Levi betrays us," he had said. "She is now about to enter the Palace, and you all know what that means. Abdul, the boatman, prepares a barque in which these lovers may disport themselves, and the priest Ama is their go-between. I watched her to-day, and she was with him three full hours in the Temple. Men and brethren, will you suffer these things? Shall such a yoke of shame lie upon our necks? It is for you to act—it is for you to go to Levi's house and reason with him. As for me——"

But at this point the women often would mock him and the men greet him with derisive laughter.

"As for thee, little monkey with vermin on thy tongue, thou mournest the bare bed and the lips which others shall kiss. Shame upon thee, Ezekiel, and shame upon thine eyes for what they see when we are blind! Let Israel reward thee for thy words. We believe none of them, for assuredly thou art but a jealous fool."

This was bad enough, but when people of the city themselves took up the cry and shouted in many streets that the youth Ezekiel was putting shame upon their King, then tumult began and a slaughter most terrible.

The warriors of many nations joined in that uprising: Syrians and Ethiopians, Arabs and men of Abyssinia—even the negroes of the South and the Bedouins of the desert. And they fought like wild beasts, many of them hardly knowing why, but all moved to that fierce anger which the East can unloose so swiftly and can chain only by the ligatures of death.

Soon every street by the Luxor gate resounded with their yells; the curved scimitars flashed in the torch's aureole; the spears were hurled; the daggers were driven into heaving bodies. And while the baser sort among them carried the shrieking women to the darker lanes, or out to the wastes beyond the gates, bruit of the tumult came presently even to the King's Palace, and the Captains were to hear that Israel had risen against the taskmaster and was fighting its way to the very throne of Egypt's king.

There could be but one answer to this, and it was made swiftly.

A great company of spearmen rode out of Tutankhamen's Palace and, asking no questions concerning the right or the wrong of it, they slaughtered all they met, putting both men and women to the sword and driving the mob headlong before their bright blades, soon to be incarnadined with the people's blood. Such a scene had not been known in Thebes for many years, nor would any who lived through it forget the terrors of that long night or the days of mourning which must follow after.

Rebecca spent the night in prayer—her aged father by her side and the hope of Jehovah's shield their one consolation. Whatever else befell, it seemed impossible that this beautiful Jewess should not be held to account for the tumult; and she saw herself dragged before Tutankhamen's throne and there judged by him for what she had been so powerless to prevent. Gone now in an instant were her hopes of flight with her lover, Ama, and the happiness of the green oasis with love for her riches. The end of it all could but be terrible, she said—and while she prayed she shuddered, fearing the arms of the King about her and his kisses upon her lips.

Evil as was her case, it fared less well with Ezekiel, by whose folly this night of terror had come.

Very early in the affray strong arms had caught him up and carried him to the Temple of the priests of Amon, and they had become his judges.

Terrible was now the predicament of a vain fool and pitiful his circumstance. For he stood before an angry tribunal—before men clothed in skins of beasts, but crowned with bands of gold on which many jewels glittered—and they charged him with the sins of the people they abhorred.

"You have said that this daughter of evil

(Continued on p. 143)



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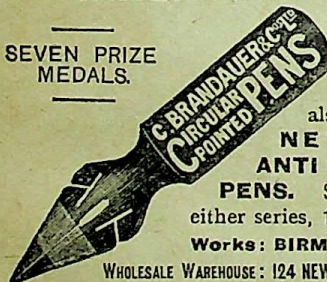
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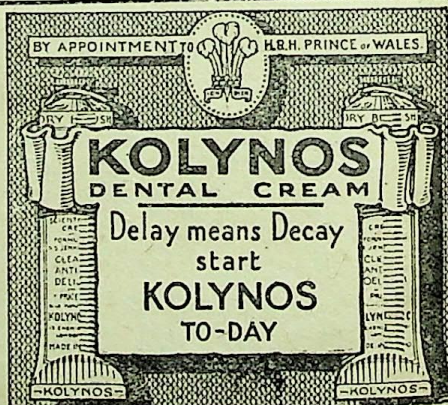


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would corrupt our King—you have charged the Highest with a heretic's faith. What, then, have you to say, O son of Israel, that we put you not to death here and now?"

He knew not how to answer them.

The perfumes in the vast Temple were heavy in his nostrils and his brain reeled. He saw a dim vista of altars and pillars and braziers and great flaming lamps—while from afar he heard the shrieks of the stricken multitude and the awful cries of the women who lost all. And vaguely he understood that all this was his doing, and that he must now suffer because of it. Yet he still had the tongue to protest, and he faced with some courage when he said:

"It is true, O lords. The girl Rebecca is going to the King's bed. Ama, the priest, will yet triumph over you. Let this thing be done and the worship of Amon is no more in the city. I have but done my duty in telling the people such things—I speak because I know and my tongue will utter no lie."

They scoffed, though they knew that the story was true and that the worship of Amon was in peril. Never must it be said, however, that they had permitted an Israelite to mock the King in their presence; and so they turned upon this brawler angrily and bade him be silent.

"Fire burn your tongue that you should speak such treason against our lord, the King. We know you, young man, and your motive is plain to us. The maiden will not go to you in marriage, and so you put about this vain story and even dare to name the King therein. Verily shall we know how to punish you for that, since all this bloodshed lies at your door, and even now we hear the voices of those who die because of your vanity. Prepare, then, to answer for your sins, for this is the last hour you have to live."

The Chief Priest thus addressed him; and, giving an order to the Captain of the Guard, he caused the young man to be seized immediately and dragged out to the Holy Fountain, in the translucent pool of which the reptiles already stirred uneasily.

The swift realization that death was the price of his folly now rushed upon Ezekiel like a freshet, and panic seized him, so that he began to tremble like a weak woman, while he cried piteously to the priests to spare him. They, however, now turned their backs upon him and soon were in deep discourse together; while the guards hustled the young man from the Temple, though he disputed every yard of the way with them and fought with the desperation of a wild animal at bay.

To go down into the everlasting darkness at his age! To see the sun rise no more, nor the moonlight upon the hills; to wait no longer for the season of harvest, nor to know that the lotus budded and the roses were the glory of the summer day! But above it all,

to leave Rebecca to the arms of another; to know no woman's love in that unending sleep—or to remember it in the world of shadows of which the priests would speak. It was as though a very pit of hell had opened at his feet and all the spirits of evil there awaited his coming. He would not die, he would cry—and in his agony the sweat fell from his face and he foamed at the mouth as though devils possessed him and could not be cast out.

To the guard all this was a common happening. So many had they dragged out headlong to the death by fire or by water; by the scimitar, or the great stone which crushed the body to pulp and made powder of the bones. Cries of agony were familiar to them and the frenzy of souls departing; yet, with it all, they could say that no greater coward than the young Jew had ever gone to the fountain. How he fought and bit at them—how he writhed and wormed as they hurried him across the courtyard and lifted him high to fling him into the terrible pool. And the reptiles had heard them, it appeared, and already had come to the surface. Monstrous jaws were thrust above the still water and jagged teeth displayed; while a low hissing from angry mouths said plainly that this was the hour of prey.

One fearful cry rang out above other sounds of the night—a loud splash was heard; then a great stirring in the pool might have been seen where the alligators were moving swiftly and the tips of their ravening snouts revealed themselves. But Ezekiel cried aloud no more, for they had torn him to pieces almost as soon as his body sank amid them; and a whole minute had not passed before he had vanished as though the earth had never known him.

And up there in the Temple the priests were still in profound conclave; and the burden of their talk was this: that for the sake of the gods of old, the woman also must perish, and that they would cause her to be arrested immediately.

Nor was it anything to them that the King had cast his eyes upon her—for was not Amon greater than any king, and were they not his priests and faithful servants?

CHAPTER VII

AMA HAS THE TIDINGS!

JANES, a son of a priest of Osiris, carried the tidings to the Temple of Ra very early in the morning, and to him Ama listened with ready ears. Some such aftermath of the tumult he had looked for; nevertheless, the swift vengeance which had overtaken the young man Ezekiel troubled him not a little, and convinced him that Rebecca also was in peril.

"You say that they cast the young man

into the pool, Janes, because of the evil he had spoken. Truly is this likely to bring all Israel about our ears and to send many to the tombs. You were wise to come to me, and I give you thanks. Now add to my burdens by taking this messenger to the Palace and doing further service to the King. There must be no holocaust of slaves in Thebes if we can prevent it—for that would be as though one spat upon the grave of our Master Akhnaton and defiled his name before the people. Go, then, to the Palace at once and let this be your burden."

He took stylo and parchment and laboriously shaped the warning words which must come without delay to Tutankhamen's ear.

"Beware of the Israelites," he wrote, "lest we perish because of them. The God of the Day bids me give you this message and hereby I do his will. Let your spearmen judge between Amon and your slaves—or the curse of Ra be upon us and upon our Kingdom."

Janes went off with the message while the priest sacrificed to the Sun God and poured a libation of red wine upon the stone that honour might be done to him.

The danger of the hour lay heavy upon him, and his fear for Rebecca and her house waxed more insistent as the moments passed.

Plainly he perceived that the priests might wreak their vengeance also upon her, counting upon the people's favour for what they did and saying that it was to safeguard the worship of the ancient gods, whom Egypt had too long forgotten.

The King, upon the other hand, would never sacrifice this beautiful Jewess if he could help it, and certainly would send his spearmen to defend her. But could he count upon such servants? The whole city had now tasted the fruits of that licentious freedom which followed upon the rejection of Ra as the only God—and it would not willingly accept the bondage of the pure religion. Ama perceived this and began to say that he must dare all and take Rebecca away even in defiance of the multitude. Yet, what of the King's will in the matter, and how would Israel itself suffer it? Did not Levi's people curse those of their children who married out of their own faith? Might they not even slay Rebecca upon the threshold of her father's house?

He was greatly troubled and prayed earnestly to the glorious god, now risen high in the heavens, that light might come to his mind and understanding to his heart.

Should he put all to a hazard and visit Rebecca's house; or should he wait awhile until his messenger returned from the Palace? Such was the burden of his prayer; nor did it remain unanswered, for when he rose from his knees he perceived a very little lad of the Hebrew faith standing in the porch of the Temple, and bidding the child

come forth, he asked him in a gentle voice what his business might be.

"I am to give you this, O Holy One"—and with trembling fingers the dark-eyed boy offered him a blossom of the lotus flower, bound around with nine strips of the crocodile's hide and sealed with a wooden button which had a rudely shaped barque carved thereon. Ama needed no surer message than that. "She is fleeing to Abdul's boat and will await me there at the ninth hour," he said to himself—and rewarded the awe-struck messenger with a piece of gold laid in the palm of a chubby hand.

"Go as thou came and say that the ninth hour shall find me waiting. Thou understandest, my child?"

"I understand, father; I will deliver your message, God keeping me."

He left as he had come, with flying feet and the gladness of achievement in his heart. Ama, however, having watched him until a turn of the narrow street had hidden him from his sight, went down to the courtyard of the Temple and there called for Darius, the Persian captain of his guard, and told him quickly what he would have to do.

"I go to-night to the barge of Abdul, the boatman, and you will appoint six to guard my steps. To you, yourself, I entrust the burden of such goods as I shall carry; you will ride out with all your company toward the oasis of Albyrra and there await my coming. Thereafter, Darius, I would establish a city of the sons of the True God, and you shall become a captain of my people. Let your love of me accompany this undertaking and be my staff, since there is no longer hope for us in this city of Thebes and evil has blinded the eyes of man. Truly do I count upon you, Darius, even as upon my own son."

He was answered warmly, for this was a man to win the love of men; and soon all was a hubbub of preparation within the precincts of the Temple—men making ready the camels for the burdens they must bear; the guard sharpening spear and scimitar; the keepers of the horses busy about their charges—and upon such a scene the messenger from Tutankhamen's Palace arrived, when at length he returned with the answer the priest awaited with such trepidation. It was brief, and clearly had been written by a priest of Isis—for such the tablets indicated.

"Get you gone with the maiden to the oasis of Esra, and there shall you have command from me. The people are disturbed because of her, and there will be no peace in the city while she is here. So be it upon you to save her and Israel."

Ama deciphered this hieroglyph slowly, and pondered long upon its meaning.

That some treachery lay behind it he had no doubt—and he saw very clearly that the King and the priests of Amon would put shame

(Continued on p. 147)

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A first prize of £1,000 will be awarded to the competitor whose forecast is nearest to the popular verdict, as shown by the votes recorded. There will be a second prize of £250, and five further prizes of £50 each will be awarded to the next best forecasts.

There will also be awarded boxes of chocolates as one thousand consolation prizes.

In the event of ties, all or any of the prizes will be divided accordingly and pooled if need be for that purpose.

Competitors may send in as many Entry Forms as they wish, but each Entry Form must be accompanied by the wrapper from a 1-lb. tin of Fry's Breakfast Cocoa. The wrapper from a 1-lb. tin counts for two entries, and from a 1-lb. tin four entries.

The decision of the Board of Directors of J.S. Fry & Sons, Ltd., as to the prize awards and as to any other matter relating to the competition, shall be accepted as final and binding, and competitors shall enter the competition on that footing only.

All envelopes (properly stamped if sent by post) containing the Entry Forms must be addressed "J.S. Fry & Sons, Ltd., 5-11 Union Street, Bristol," and be marked "FRY NAME," and must arrive at that address not later than twelve noon on Thursday, December 20th, 1923.

J. S. Fry & Sons, Ltd., will not be responsible for any entries being lost, mislaid or delayed. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery or receipt.

Letters must not be enclosed with entries, and no correspondence will be entered into regarding the prize awards, or this competition, or anything connected therewith.

J. S. Fry & Sons, Ltd., do not bind themselves to use any name for which a prize may be awarded.

No one in the employment of the Company is eligible for the Competition.

TO THE TRADE.—£100, £25 and five £5's, for the retailers named by prize-winners in this competition.

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Place these ten names in order of popularity

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<input type="checkbox"/> Matilda	<input type="checkbox"/> Patience
<input type="checkbox"/> Barbara	<input type="checkbox"/> Grace
<input type="checkbox"/> Prudence	<input type="checkbox"/> Phyllis
<input type="checkbox"/> Elsie	<input type="checkbox"/> Jane

Name & Address

Country

Cocoa bought from

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Cas. Mag.
Nov.

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and send
in this
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SUNLIGHT SOAP

LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED, PORT SUNLIGHT.

upon him because of Rebecca, and would say to all the city:

"Behold this man of the One God, who departs with a maiden that has mocked the King."

Yet even that fear was less potent than the passion which now burned in his veins and threatened wholly to undo him.

"If I go to Esra, Sherdan and the Bedouins assuredly will do me a mischief," he could say—and then, "they will carry her to the King, and none but they will know what has befallen her."

His sagacity did not fail him, it appears, and he knew well what scheme was hatching. Not at Esra should Rebecca be found, but in the South where freedom lay. For such a sanctuary he prayed as a son of the desert for water. That very night he would hold Rebecca in his arms.

The long day waxed to its zenith and waned with intolerable slowness, as it seemed to Ama. There was no longer any tumult in the city, where houses were hushed because of the deeds of yesternight; and women wept for their dead, and the King's horsemen went sulkily as though disappointed in their hopes of slaughter, and still desirous to hack and hew at shrinking flesh and cowed fugitive.

Ama counted these long hours as he watched the great ball of the sun sink aflame into the Western desert and the sheen as of molten copper from the face of the unruffled river. Now came the hour of sunset and the raven; of lovers' light laughter and the shawm of the wanton. Ama wrapped himself in a great skin of the leopard at that time, and with the priestly uræus of gold upon his head and a staff of ebony and silver in his hand, he veiled himself from the gaze of the multitude and went down swiftly toward the river.

Soon he perceived that his path was dogged by mocking idlers, and that armed men were abroad, desiring to delay him.

Despite the six lusty spearmen who endeavoured to make way for him, crowds would gather suddenly at street corners and obstructions be made as though by hazard—yet such was the respect that the better sort of citizen had for him that none dared to mock him openly—for they believed still that the great god Ra rode in the heavens, and that he could smite them with fire. So they merely jostled and pushed, made merry with the spearmen, and contrived that the way should be long and the progress of the priest but slow.

Ama's impatience did not dare to rebel against such treatment, nor might he resent it. He continued to hope that he might leave an honoured name behind him in Thebes and save Rebecca from the finger of scorn, which many would gladly point at her. In this hope he uttered no word to any man, but passed amid them as a mysterious figure of the night, silent and majestic, and born to command.

None the less, his heart beat fast—for was not this the appointed hour, and should not the

new day give him Rebecca wholly, in that joy of perfect possession for which he had longed so ardently. He believed that it would be so; and his eyes were dim and his limbs trembled when at last he drew near to the river and looked eagerly for the barge of Abdul, which should have been anchored there.

But no barge could be seen at all—neither anchored by the bank nor out on the broad stream, which all had deserted at this hour of night.

Fearing to believe what his amazed eyes showed him—struck dumb by the tragedy of this discovery, he went on a little way and again stood to search the winding ways of the great waters and to ask of them a message of hope.

They answered him mockingly, with a whisper of the warm wind and music of the lyre as though some should laugh even while he mourned.

"God, my God!" he cried at length, "give me strength, lend me thy wisdom that I may save her." And so he stood there, rocking upon his heels like a drunken man, his brain confused and his eyes almost blinded!

Whither had they carried her, this woman he had loved more than his own life?

The very vision of her beauty could deride him now, and he saw her at the glory of the day, with her raven hair black upon her ivory skin and her eyes as the gates of heaven, and her mouth as the ripe fruit to taste of which was life. So he would have enfolded her in his aching arms, and so did the phantoms elude him.

They had carried her away, then, these priests of Amon? Was it not the ninth hour, and should not she have been awaiting him in the boat? He beat his breast at that thought and cried as one suffering the ultimate agony.

"God, my God—thou Lord of the Day and the Heavens—hasten now to thy servant and have mercy upon him. Save this woman for thy mercy's sake. Lend me thine aid that I may find her. Make strong my right arm that I may avenge her. Oh, show me thy wisdom that I may rejoice, thou all seeing, all knowing, creator of the day, be thou my help!"

Thus he prayed, going on still towards the river, as though there was yet hope.

And the great round moon mocked him as he went, and the laughter of the Syrian women came to his ears upon the breeze as though this alone was the message of the City of Thebes.

CHAPTER VIII

REBECCA BECOMES A PRISONER

REBECCA had set off a little before the ninth hour of the day, as her message to Ama promised that she would, and with a boy of her household to carry her pack she had crept through the dark streets towards the house of Abdul, believing that there lay sanctuary,

and that a few brief hours would carry her far from Thebes and its perils.

None interfered with her as she went; none turned a head to look at the closely veiled young woman, who, followed by the little lad, thus passed amidst the babbling throngs or hurried by the houses of the dissolute and the profligate. Even her own father, the Man of Levi, believed that she was then sleeping in her bed; nor had she dared to utter a word of farewell to him lest her courage should fail her, and all be undone.

She had done with the old home for ever. The wilderness and the dream nights of love now awaited her. The God of Israel directed her steps, she believed, and he would lead her. Perchance the day might come when she and her lover might return triumphantly to Thebes; but the years must pass before such a miracle could come to be. For the moment she was but the uncrowned bride, going out to gather the roses of the visions and to fashion a garland of them. She longed for kisses and the fruits of sacrifice—she thought already to feel the arms of Ama about her.

So we see her, hurrying through the darkened streets and looking eagerly over the river, where stars of light marked the anchorage of ships and a young moon cast dim shadows upon grey and waveless waters. The boat of Abdul was there, she thought, but mists of fear deceived her eyes, and she must ask a question of the lad before she could make sure.

"Do you see the barge, Michael—are you sure that it is where we seek it?"

"It is there, lady. I see the barge and the men. It is all prepared according to the promise."

She started at the words.

"What men should there be—save Abdul and his son? Oh, tell me quickly, for my eyes are dim—what men are there, then, and whom do they seek?"

She had begun to tremble, for her woman's wit could detect that something was astir, and what omen could that be but the omen of evil? The lad, however, would have reassured her.

"They will be the servants of the holy priests," he surmised, "assuredly, he would not come alone. They have brought his goods—and yes, I see his spearmen at the water's brink. Let us be of good courage, then, for surely they will protect us."

She did not wholly believe it, for her instinct was awakened and a sense of danger not to be put away. Nevertheless, she went on slowly towards the river, and coming presently to the precincts of Abdul's house, she perceived the strangers by the light of torches which some of them carried, and she knew instantly that all her fears were justified.

"Oh God!" she cried, standing quite still, while her heart beat wildly. "Those are not the friends of my lord—surely they come from the Temple of Amon, Michael."

The little lad did not know what to say to her. He stood there, open-mouthed, while he

watched the torches casting their deep yellow light upon the still waters, and saw the spears flash when the golden rays caught the steel of them. Truly this was a terrible discovery. Somebody, then, had betrayed them to the priests.

"Lady," he said, "we must go at once. Those are the men of Amon, as you say. Let me run to the Temple and tell the holy priest, while you wait here in a thicket of the reeds. The lord Ama will find a way, surely—oh, let me go while there is yet time."

She bade him away and turned to hide herself as he had wished. There were little clumps of the high reeds hereabouts, and she believed that she could lay concealed until Ama might come to her; but this was a vain hope, as it proved; for while she still stood uncertain and the darkness had hardly covered the speeding lad, behold a spearman looked into her very face from the shadows, and, crying out to the others behind him, declared that this was the woman they sought.

"Here is your Jewess, my friends," he shouted to them. "Let the Captain know, for the tidings will be welcome to him." And clapping a hand upon the arm of the trembling girl he drew her forth and bade them lend the light of a torch that he might feast his eyes upon the spectacle.

Rebecca neither flinched nor made any movement. There are calamities the mind cannot apprehend immediately; a shape of disaster too terrible to be discerned immediately—an abyss of despair so profound that darkness alone is the first fruit of its depth. That death had touched her with hot fingers the beautiful girl knew too well, but all else was oblivion. She heard the raucous voice of the soldier as though he spoke to someone afar; she saw his face, but could not have said what manner of man he was; she looked at the spear he carried and wondered that it shone so brightly. And when others gathered about her and the Captain came and gloated upon the captive, she still had no word to offer them.

An intense craving for the man she loved was growing in her heart and slowly forcing the tears from her eyes. Oh God! if Ama would but come! Such was the prayer that none but her God might hear.

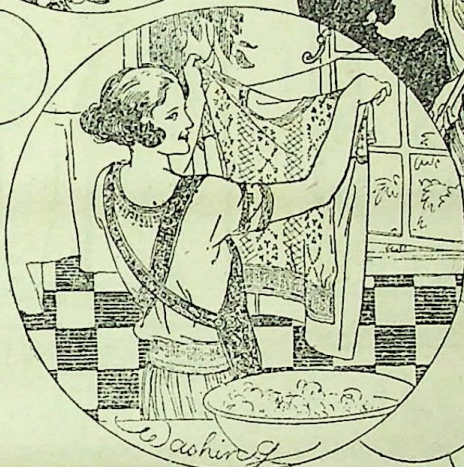
They led her up towards the Temple of Amon, mocking her as she went, and showing her to any that passed by. The Captain, indeed, had caught her by the hand, and a jest was upon his lips, despite her tears. "They will scourge you and let you go," said he, "then you shall come to my house and we will forget it over a cup of wine. Do not be afraid, my pretty Jewess, for the King is a friend to your people, and nobody will dare to forget that. I may have the flogging of you myself, and assuredly you will find that my arm is light."

And then with a laugh he drew her closer to him and attempted to kiss her on the lips. Rebecca, however, had still the strength of her

(Continued on p. 151)

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stones, etc., are all simply the penalties of neglecting kidneys which have become weakened so that they cease to excrete the constantly accumulating uric acid and other impurities. However, no one need be a martyr to these complaints for a single day. Simply flush, cleanse and purify the kidneys occasionally by drinking a tumbler of water to which a level teaspoonful of pure refined *Alkia Saltrates* has been added. Any chemist can supply this pleasant-tasting compound at slight cost, and it dissolves sharp uric acid crystals as hot water dissolves sugar. *When dissolved they cannot be painful* nor lodge in joints and muscles; also, the acid is then quickly filtered out and expelled by the kidneys. The saltrated water will also stimulate a torpid liver or clogged intestines, clearing them and the entire system of poisonous impurities or acids, sour bile, mucus, and bacteria.—A. L.

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old courage, and, striking him in the face, she bade him stand away from her.

"Do the priests of Amon then, send their soldiers to do evil to the women of my race? Let all the city hear of it and judge," and she cried aloud to those who passed by and up to the windows of the houses: "Good people all, see how this Captain of the priests of Amon deals with a woman that is helpless in his hands. Let Israel hear of it that he may be judged by them!" And, at that, he drew back, for he feared the judgment of the King upon his acts, knowing well what the city said of his royal master and Rebecca the Jewess.

There was no more insult now, neither by word nor deed, until they entered the great Temple and there found the priests of Amon assembled. Bruit of the affair had already come to their ears by the mouths of many runners, and great joy possessed them, since at last they could deal with the woman who would have persuaded the King to cast out Amon that Jehovah might reign. Rebecca saw them to the number of one-and-twenty standing in a great circle about the stone of sacrifice, their hands crossed upon their breasts and their robes dazzling with the splendour of gold and silver and precious stones; and her heart failed her at the spectacle. How menacing were those eyes which now sought to read her own; what fearful symbols they wore upon the glittering fabrics of their habits—the shapes of devouring snakes and lions' heads, and the faces of animals that never were upon land or sea. She could shudder at those; but her eyes were bright when she looked up at them, and her words came quickly, as though she was not afraid to speak.

"Daughter, what story is this, that thou hast affronted our Lord, the King, even in the streets of this our city? Art thou, then, beloved by him, as thou sayest, or has calumny put this charge upon thee?"

"The charge is false," was her ready rejoinder. "I am the servant of the Lord our King, and I kneel in his footsteps. Who sayeth that I have spoken of him other than as my lord and master sayeth the thing which is not. Let your words be proved by witness, O disciples of Amon, or let amend be made unto me. For where is he who would accuse me, and what is his complaint? I wait, my lords, until he shall answer unto me justly."

She looked round about her proudly as though this were answer enough to the accusations of the priests, but herein she failed to measure the cunning of her accusers or the nature of the case they had prepared against her. For, no sooner had she spoken than a young man stepped forward to declare that he had seen her at the Luxor gate and that she had dared to stop the King's very chariot that she might have speech with him.

"Many witnessed that, my lords," he said, "there was one of her race there who bade the charioteer draw rein, and when he had done so this maiden came forth that she might hold

the Highest in talk before the people. Afterwards all heard her boasting that she had but to speak the word and every Temple but that of the God Ra would be closed in Thebes. I relate what all the city know, my lords, and many will bear witness of the truth. Let her answer me if she can."

Another took his place, and another and another, and the burden of all was the same. This Jewess maiden had not been afraid to say that the Queen was not greater than she, and that she might enter the Palace when she would—none therein being so bold as to gainsay her. Nor were her wild protests of avail, nor did they serve her. In vain she asked that she might be carried before King Tutankhamen that he might be her judge. The savage faces of the priests confronted her, and upon them was written only the sentence of her doom.

"You lie, maiden," they said to her; or, "We do not wish to hear you, for have not these spoken?" And she could but weep now for the end was near.

"Let her be taken to the barge of Abdul, even as she wished to go," cried the Chief Priest, and a sneer was upon his lips while he spoke. But Rebecca knew that this was a sentence of death, and she fainted when the soldiers came to fetch her, falling inanimate into the very arms of the Captain who had said that he would flog her and that his arm would be light.

To the barge of Abdul. Where, then, did that lie, and what was the purpose of the priests?

Hostile hands, it appears, had rowed the barque away from its master's house, and hidden it from the sight of Ama when he had gone down to the river with his mind afire and the step of a young man who seeks a mistress beyond the gate.

Nearer to the city's heart it lay, anchored at the steps of a little temple of Isis, while within that temple sons of the funerary rites worked laboriously by a lantern's light, and laughed as they worked when they bethought them of what was to come.

No ghouls seeking flesh could have been more joyous. "She will live many hours if the winds keep faith with us," they said to one another, and so they shaped the planks and hammered the nails and declared that here was a barque fit truly for any woman who would lie at the King's right hand.

Now, what they shaped was a great coffin of stout wood, and in it the priests of Amon had commanded that Rebecca should take her last voyage, down towards the city of the Horizon of God, whence she and her lord had come to work this mischief upon the citizens of Thebes.

A merciful death, for they might have dealt very differently with her—have thrown her to the reptiles, or burned her alive upon some monstrous brazier, or crushed her bones beneath the mighty stone. But they chose another instrument, saying truly that the King

might never know how she had perished, and that they would deny that she had been punished in the Temple where they had judged her. And upon such cleverness they could plume themselves, for assuredly the people, who were true servants of Isis, would applaud what they had done.

To Rebecca it mattered not, for she beheld all things as in a haze of dreaming, and when they brought her into the Temple of Isis she was aware only of strange figures about her and the menacing faces of half-naked smiths.

For a little while, it may be, she could believe that the sentence which the Chief Priest had pronounced was to be carried out after the manner of his words, and that she was to be taken back to the City of the Horizon of God whence she had come. And this hope seemed justified when those about began to twit her upon her coming voyage, saying: "You will have the moon's light for your journey, maiden"; or, "The waters will be kind to you and the wind is your friend." All this went on for some little while, the Captain alone seeking to hide the truth from her. "I will save you yet, daughter of Israel," he said to her apart, "if I may hope for a lover's recompense." But at that she drew away from him and gently removed the strong hand which gripped her arm.

"There is none that can save me from my enemies, and you know it," she rejoined. "Why, then, waste words? Am I not to go to the City of the Horizon of God, even as the priest commanded? Will they deal otherwise with me than as your priests have ordered it? Oh, speak not of the things which can never be, for what daughter of Israel marries with the stranger, and where is the house that could shelter her from her peoples' anger?"

He knew that it was true, and cast down his eyes. A young priest had now come up to them, and a fanatical zeal brooked no further delay. "All is prepared," the priest declared in a low voice, and then he bade Rebecca follow him, and, looking once more at the Captain as though his poor friendship was all she had to serve her in that dreadful hour, she passed out towards the river, and there for the first time she saw what they had prepared, and understood the fearful punishment the priests had decreed for her.

"O God of Israel, or, my God, help thou thy servant!" she cried in an agony she could not hide from them; and so, drawing back from the open coffin in a frenzy of fear, she beat with her little hands at the faces of the guards, wrestled as some frightened animal with them, and implored them for God's sake to kill her where she stood. As well might she have beat upon the walls of the tombs without the walls, or addressed her prayer to the Sphinx of the desert. Laughter was her answer, and the contempt of those who remembered only that she was the enemy of their goddess.

"Let Jehovah save thee," they mocked. "Let him snatch thy flesh from the fishes. And, throwing themselves upon her anew, they lifted

her up as though her body had been a child's burden and thrust her brutally into the barque of death they had prepared for her. Her very cries were soon drowned by the noise of their hammering; but looking down through the window of crystal which malignity had set in the face of the coffin, they mocked her by gesture, even when their words could be heard by her no longer.

Now, in triumph, they carried the coffin to the water's edge and prepared to launch it upon the still surface of the moon-lit river.

The young Captain had come up to them again, and though he seemed to jest, there was sadness in his voice and his heart was heavy.

"She was made for love and not for death," he said, and, bending over her, he bade them lift a lantern that he might see her face once more.

None gainsaid him, for the priests of Isis were lovers themselves, and perchance their thoughts of her were as his own.

"You should have kept her from the Temple," they told him. "You had no courage, Captain; but it is too late now. Let us do our work, then, for the hour grows late, and some of us are still fasting," and they pointed to the dark waters and waited impatiently for him to have done with it. None saw him, when, very deftly, he thrust the crystal into the coffin with all the might of his elbow pressed upon it, and told her in a whisper that he would yet seek to save her. "Keep thy courage, maiden, there is still hope," he said, and then, helping them to lift the burden, he also shielded his handiwork from their eyes as they thrust the coffin out into the river and shouted altogether a mocking farewell to the victim of their hate.

She saw above her the wonderful heaven of stars and the refulgent moon shedding its soft rays upon her.

The terrible music in her ears was that of the waters lapping gently upon the side of the frail barque—and she heard the hissing of the reptiles who swarmed about her, waiting for their prey. A curious lethargy had fallen upon her—a merciful drowsy of trance, in which understanding was dulled and a dream-like state achieved. She was going out to her God, drifting to that vague underworld, from which she would be caught up presently and wafted through the high heavens in the chariots of the sun. And her lover, Ama, would be there waiting for her, for was he not the servant of Ra, and would he not seek her out even amid the mysteries of the Infinite? A burning hope, not of this world, but of the next, now consumed her, and she closed her eyes and lay very still, as though the angel of death would come presently, and, lifting her in his arms, would show her a throne of light, and say: "Here is your lover waiting for you—here is your journey's end."

There was a refreshing breeze of the night upon her face at this time, and she could breathe quite freely. They had not bound her

limbs, but so narrow was the bed upon which she lay that movement was quite impossible, and she remained as one petrified, unable to lift a hand or even to turn her head.

Had the night been other than it was the end might have come quickly, the water surging in through the open window and the strange barque submerged while yet the priests of Isis were watching it upon its voyage. But destiny willed otherwise, and the coffin drifted slowly upon the river's breast, away from Thebes and down towards that distant city, wherein, men had said mockingly, her liberty might be re-won. Not a papyrus marred that slow drifting nor a reed stayed the grim boat upon its journey. To the City of the Horizon it appeared to be going surely, and as it went Rebecca could hear the voices of people upon the banks, the cries of boatmen one to another, the laughter of women, and the lilt of the lyre. These bade her farewell as she went out into the night, saying surely that death was very near to her, and that darkness must come presently and the mercy of the Infinite be upon her.

The priests of Isis closed their Temple and went off to feast in the houses of their women. The young Captain, however, was in no mood to join them; nor did any house of pleasure harbour him.

The beauty of the Jewess girl had made a sure appeal to him, and he could not easily forget it.

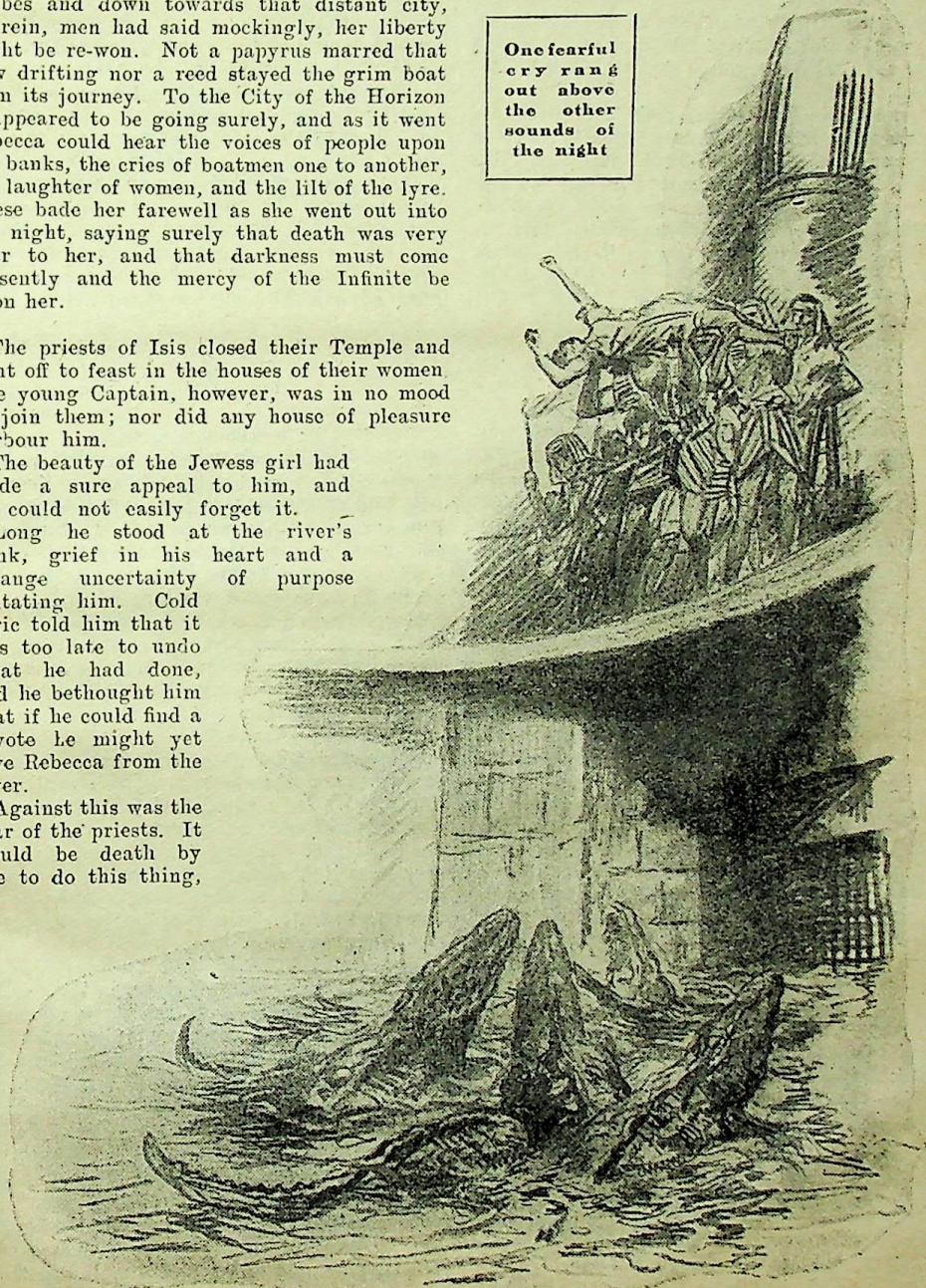
Long he stood at the river's bank, grief in his heart and a strange uncertainty of purpose agitating him. Cold logic told him that it was too late to undo what he had done, and he bethought him that if he could find a cayote he might yet save Rebecca from the river.

Against this was the fear of the priests. It would be death by fire to do this thing,

and it could hardly be done without discovery.

Let him seek her, and either he himself must carry her away from Thebes, or he must leave her to go unprotected into the wilderness. She could hardly fail to find there a death more terrible than that she now was suffering; nor might he hope that his chivalry could be hidden eventually from the masters he served or from their vengeance. Some upon the river

One fearful
cry rang
out above
the other
sounds of
the night



would hear of it and carry the news to the market place, and say: "Lo, a priest of Isis saved her, and there is your miracle."

A braver man could have put all this aside and gone out immediately upon a work of mercy his manhood commanded; but this soldier offered scruples when courage should have been his gift; and while the thought of the woman's agony racked him, while his imagination showed him the coffin lapped by the waves, the reptiles that swarmed about it, and the beautiful face of the woman looking up to the stars, he could add to it the subtler argument: that he had his duty to do, and that, after all, she was a foe to the gods he served.

Hence came hesitation, and thus were his eyes averted from the waters. Surely she was dead, and no will of his could save her! He sighed upon that, remembering her beauty, and very slowly he went away from the river towards the town, as a man whose spirit is afflicted and whose conscience will not acquit him. He could have saved her—he had not done so, and surely to-morrow's sun would accuse him.

It was very dark in the purlieus of the Temple, and although lights shone in the distance, they did not serve his footsteps.

Strange thoughts troubled him, and fears of the world of death and of its people. He thought that he saw Rebecca's face amid the stars and that she was weeping. Or, again, a dark figure followed him and he beheld the giant of a man with a veil about his head and a great skin covering his back and loins. Here, surely, was a creature of his fears whom he should have mocked for the very credit of the arms he bore. But mocking died away upon his lips when he perceived that the Unknown approached him and would speak with him. A man like himself, after all, and what had he to fear of any man?

"Peace be unto thee—why seekest thou me at such an hour, O stranger?" he said at length.

"I seek one who must answer for the deed he hath done this night. Where is the woman thou hast sent to the living death, and what wrong had she done thee that thou hast become the assassin of the heretic and the infidel?"

The Captain knew not what to say. In other circumstances he would have drawn his sword and slain his accuser where he stood; but the crime of the night had robbed him of his self-assurance, and he could but answer lamely, believing that he was justly charged and that his own crime lay heavily upon him.

"Who, then, art thou that speakest of these things, and what was the maiden to thee?" he demanded.

The priest threw back the veil and showed the golden uraeus with its jewels sparkling in the moonbeams. Truly he was a majestic figure—as of a very god come down to earth that right and justice might be done. And the Captain bent the knee before him, for he

knew him and had worshipped Ra in his Temple while the great Akhmaton lived.

"My lord, I knew you not at the first. I did but my duty as the priests commanded me. Would you have had it otherwise?"

"The duty which shall carry thee to the eternal darkness in the day of your judgment."

And then, with a voice which betrayed his agony, he asked:

"Is thy work done, then? Is the maiden dead?"

Very eagerly, as though the gods had decreed that there might yet be hope, the Captain clutched the priest's arm and began to drag him back towards the Temple.

"I thank the god who sent thee to me," he said. "The maiden may yet live, for I myself have broken the crystal of her coffin, and the waters sleep, as you see. Come, then, my lord, and help me, for surely you were called to save her—"

And hurrying still more he came at last to the river's brink, and together they looked over the silent water, seeking a message, they knew not whether it were of life or death.

CHAPTER IX

THE LEOPARD SPEAKS

THREE miles from the city of Thebes, the coffin with the body of the now almost inanimate Jewess was caught up by a bed of papyrus, and there so set across the current of the river that any little stirring of the wind assuredly would have wrecked it.

Mercifully, Rebecca knew nothing of this, for a spell of terrible fear and suffering had now given place to trance, and in her sleep, which should have been the last she would know on earth, she saw her lover's face, and held out her arms to him.

There was a desolate bank beyond the bed or reeds, and thereafter a little sward of the grass which led up to the low limestone hills here abounding. A company of Arabs from the desert had encamped at the spot, and their fires were lighted and their cooking pots made ready when the strange barque thus drifted down to them, and the sleeping woman became their neighbour.

Any accident would have discovered her to their eyes, and set her, a slave, in their midst; but destiny had written her story otherwise, and the men feasted solemnly, as was their wont, and made obeisance to the night and set their watch at the doors of their tents, and so slept, knowing not that death might be their neighbour or that such a prize of womanhood could have been theirs for the taking. So did the God, Jehovah, keep his servant, and so was his mercy shown to her.

She must perish, it seemed, and no turn of wind or weather could save her. These reeds themselves would bury that derelict coffin if

(Continued on p. 157)



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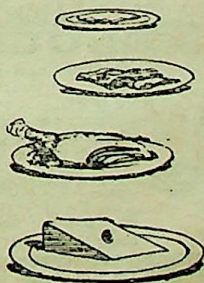
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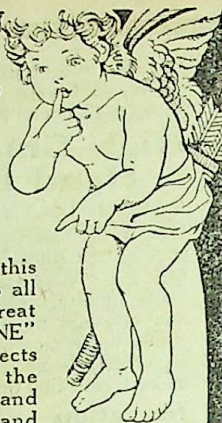
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no hand snatched it from them, while should the wind arise it would be engulfed immediately. The wandering Arabs would come down to the river's brink at daylight, but that would be too late, nor would their eyes be seeking such a derelict. Even the cayote, rowed desperately by Ama and the Captain, should have passed the spot by, and might have done so a thousand times but for that capricious turn of fortune which sent a wild beast to the scene and bade him play a part in it.

The leopard, truly, scented this human presence while man was ignorant of it. He came down from a den in the hills furtively—the wind between him and the camp of Arabs; his eyes glowing in the darkness and his skin bristling with the expectancy of prey. And at the water's edge he stood raging, for the river baffled him, and the reeds were thick and the fear of the men still upon him.

Instinct seemed to tell him that if he leaped into the stream he would be heard and hunted by the sleepers, and that his own body would be torn and not that of the victim he would devour. He reflected upon it, pacing up and down the grassy bank as a lion that is caged and sniffing the night air with nostrils which hungered. In the end a fearful howling escaped him, and at that the dogs of the camp howled in their turn, and heads were put out of tent flaps and men asked of men what they had heard.

"A leopard at the water's edge—he will not trouble us."

"There is a prey, then, in the river. The priests of Isis make offering."

"For their own sins, my brethren—let us sleep, for the night wanes."

The camp fell to silence again; but not the two who rowed the boat with strong arms, encouraging each other with good words, and saying: "She yet may live—we must not abandon her—the God of Day give us strength."

Every clump of reeds had been searched by Ama's eyes; in every bay had he looked for the dreadful barque wherein there lay all his hope of this world and the next. The void river, the waning moon, the certainty that the day must betray Rebecca, even if she lived, nerved his arm and drove him to a frenzy of effort. Nor was the young soldier by his side now less zealous. Shame of what he had done burned him as a fever. If he could but have drawn sword for the woman he had slain so cruelly. If a miracle could be wrought! Then, and then only, could he look upon the new day without disgrace, and then only could he say: "I have done my duty."

They came to the great bend of the river beyond which lay the camp of the Arabs, and true, the sight of the reddening fires upon the hillsides alarmed them not a little. Had these men, then, been the harbingers of discovery—had they taken Rebecca from the river? And if so, to what end? The priest shuddered at his own thoughts, and as he indicated the place called the young soldier's attention to it.

"A camp of Arabs, my son. Think you that any hope lies there?"

The Captain was very grave.

"If they have been to the water's edge since nightfall; yet"—and here his countenance lightened—"yet, why should it be so, my lord? Such is not their custom. They have drawn their water at sunset and afterwards will be visiting their women. Pay no heed to them, but let us pass on. She whom we seek will not lie here."

It was, perchance, the expression of a hope rather than a conviction, and no hour since the beginning of it had been so charged with the vagary of fortune. Here were these two, seeking a woman with passionate ardour, and that woman lay not fifty yards from the cayote which carried them; nevertheless, they were proposing to row away from the scene with all speed and to seek to forget it.

(Concluded overleaf)

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From that, as we read, a very miracle saved them—the howling of the beast upon the shore and the answering yelps of the watch dogs at the doors of the tents.

From the dream of her lover and the joys of the infinite heaven which shielded them, Rebecca awoke to realize the truth once more, and to suffer again as she had suffered in the vivid hours. Death in a shape most horrible menaced her. The dreadful appurtenances of the grave shook her soul with a dread beyond words to measure; and while she lay there transfixed by all the horror of it, she heard the howling of the beast upon the river's brink, and understood its meaning. Then, and then only, did her voice find utterance in one dreadful cry, which went up to the skies as though pity should be wrung from their mysteries by the very agony which beseeched them.

Ama heard her as a man struck dumb suddenly by emotion. He stood for one tremendous instant, a majestic figure in the waning light, and as he stood the young soldier watched him with fire in his eyes.

"She is there, my lord. God is good, and he has heard us."

Still Ama did not speak; but almost hurling himself upon the oar he drove the barque madly toward the sheltering reeds.

There were many lanterns about the coffin, and the dark faces of the awakened Arabs, as scimitars cleaved the knotted reeds asunder and spearheads lifted the heavy wood which imprisoned the fainting woman. But the arms that lifted her, as it were, from the tomb, were the arms of Ama, the priest, and his was the breath of life breathed out upon her as she lay.

"Beloved, it is I. Dost thou not know me?"

She lifted her trembling hands, and he caught them to his breast. Vaguely she saw him in the flickering rays, and understood that she had come down from the skies of her dreams to the earth wherein her lover awaited her. And so men turned away from them, saying: "Here are two that should be alone," while the young Captain girt his sword sadly about him and bethought him again of the Temple. Must he return to the priests who had done this thing? Or should he seek the City of the Horizon of God where Jehovah was worshipped? He knew not, but remembered only that he was alone and that his gods had deserted him.

Ama, however, waited but for his own horsemen to come up, and the Arabs aiding him to fashion a litter, he set out at break of day to skirt the city of Thebes and reach that country of the far South where he would build a city and be the father of his people.

And now, for many nights, the moon would look down kindly upon the lovers and the wilderness hear the whisper of their words. And at dawn they would worship the great god Ra together, and looking deep, each into the eyes of the other, would discover the heaven of their vision and its eternal verities.

Nor did Rebecca know as thus she fled far from her kith and kin that the Man of Levi's son, her little brother, was one day to liberate Israel from the yoke, and that he would go to Pharaoh and say to him: "Set these my people free."

But thus it befell, and thus, upon the Red Sea shore, after many years, the priest Ama heard of the flight, and taking his beloved with him, he also set out for that Land of Promise wherein Israel henceforth must dwell.

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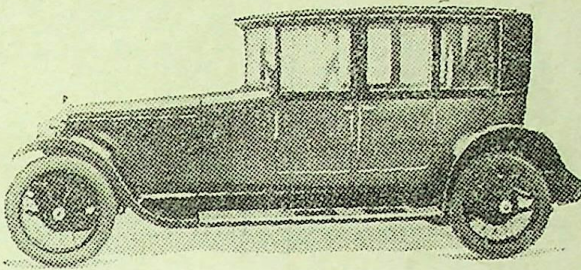
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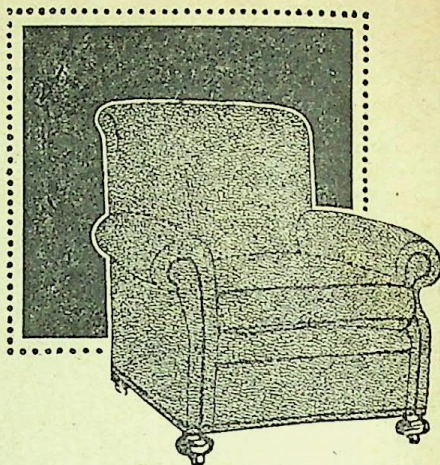
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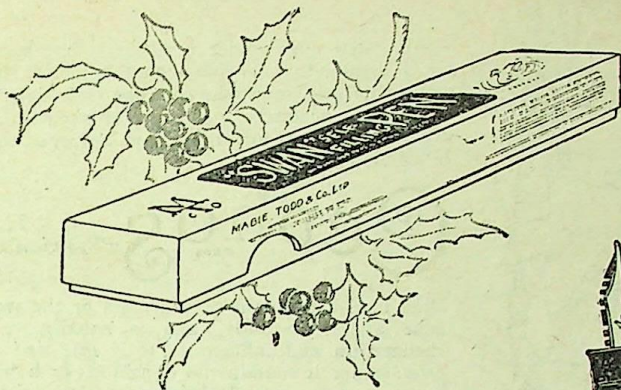
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Solving a Problem. Puzzled one (Darlington).—Put the letter in the fire and take no more notice of it.

Lover of Dancing. Dollie (Maida Vale).—I quite agree with you that it is only the kill-joys who raise an outcry against dancing. It is certainly not at all injurious to health, especially when it is enjoyed in moderation, as in your own case. It is quite another matter to dance night after night, so that a full night's rest is but rarely enjoyed. You can counteract the dryness of your skin by massaging a little Pond's cold cream into your face and neck every night. This will keep your complexion fresh and young, and you will enjoy its cool fragrance.

Good Manners. Ignoramus (Datchet).—Always rise to shake hands. When you are introduced to superiors in rank, let them make the first move and do not offer to shake hands unless they do first.

Remedy for Headache. Prudence (Matlock).—The remedy you inquire about is Cephos. It contains no dangerous drugs or narcotics, and you can obtain it from all good chemists. If you would like to try a sample first, why not write, mentioning CASSELL'S MAGAZINE, to Messrs. Cephos, Ltd., Blackburn? Nothing makes one more miserable and unable to cope with life's duties than a bad headache, and I am glad to be able to recommend so effectual a remedy.

A Winter Game. Invalid (Manchester).—Have you tried playing Patience? There are several good works on the subject from which it is quite easy to learn new games. If you play with the regulation small-sized cards, you can enjoy the game on your invalid table. I hope this suggestion will be of practical use.

Foot Comfort. L. D. M. (Harrogate).—I have read your letter with great interest and think you have apportioned your dress allowance with much discrimination. You rightly attach great importance to the selection of boots and shoes, for both comfort and appearance depend on well-shod feet. Personally, I find Norwell's "Perth" footwear very satisfactory. Their shoes always look so good and can be relied on for satisfactory wear, and also (which is important to you, as you say your feet are rather tender) they are really comfortable. If you mention CASSELL'S MAGAZINE, Messrs. Norwell, at Perth, Scotland, will send you a free illustrated catalogue.

Handy Measures. Busy-bee (Lincoln).—As soon as you can manage it, you should certainly add a pair of scales to your kitchen equipment. So much of the success of cookery depends on accurate weighing out of quantities of ingredients. Meanwhile you can bear in mind that a rounded tablespoonful of flour equals 1 oz., one teacupful of sugar

equals $\frac{1}{4}$ lb., and that the average breakfast-cupful equals $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of liquid.

Vegetable Cookery. Miriam (Richmond).—The general rule is to put all vegetables grown underground in cold water, and those which grow above-ground must be put into boiling water.

Aspect of a House. Home-builder (Sudbury).—If you can manage it, let the house face S.E. or S.W. Then you will get sun in your principal rooms. The pantries, store-rooms, and larder should face north, then they will keep cool even in hot weather.

Winter Fashions. Maisie (Ealing).—Rumours from Paris describe this as distinctly a fur and ribbon season. You will have observed how much fur is used not only on walking suits and overcoats, but also on house and evening gowns. Ribbon is used lavishly in the newest millinery, and effectively adorns many charming dinner and dance frocks.

Letter of Introduction. Ambitious (Croydon).—You can enclose the letter of introduction with a covering letter asking for an appointment, or if you prefer, you can write stating that so-and-so has given you a letter of introduction, and asking when it will be convenient for you to call and present it. Under the circumstances either course is perfectly correct.

Relaxed Throat. Eileen (Putney).—Put a tablespoonful of ordinary brown vinegar into a jug of boiling water. Wrap a towel over your face and keep the vapour from your eyes and then inhale it in deep breaths through your mouth. You should repeat this treatment several times daily.

Would-be Emigrant. Ambitious (Rochester).—Before making up your mind, make full inquiries about our different colonies. They vary considerably, not only in climate, but also in the opportunities they offer.

Early Morning Study. Bookworm (Manchester).—I can quite understand your anxiety to study hard and pass the examination at your first shot. But do not burn the candle at both ends. You should go to bed at 10 or 10.30 p.m., and then if you wish to do an hour's work before breakfast you will be able to do so. But if you work on until midnight or even later, you will not be able to rise so early, and if you do you will soon begin to feel overtired and worn out.

Railway Book for Children. Waysider (Lancaster).—Engines have a wonderful fascination for boys and girls, and I am not surprised to learn that your little boy is always craving for information. I think the book you speak of must be the one published this year by the Great Western Railway. It is called "The 10.30 Limited," and tells the whole story of the working of a great railway system in simple language that every child can understand. There are 118 pages, with plenty of pictures, and the price is only one shilling.

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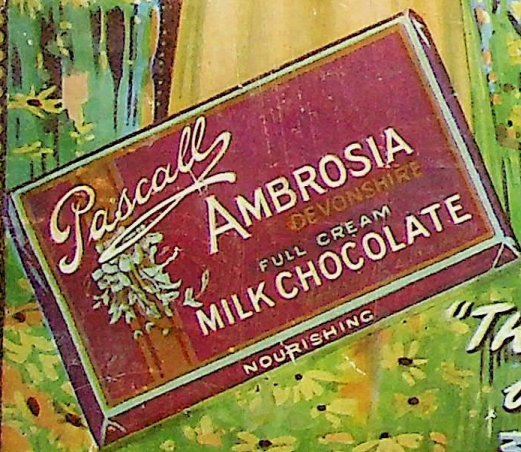
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